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STOKESHILL PLACE ;

OR

THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

“ MRS. ARMYTAGE,”

“ MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS,” etc.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

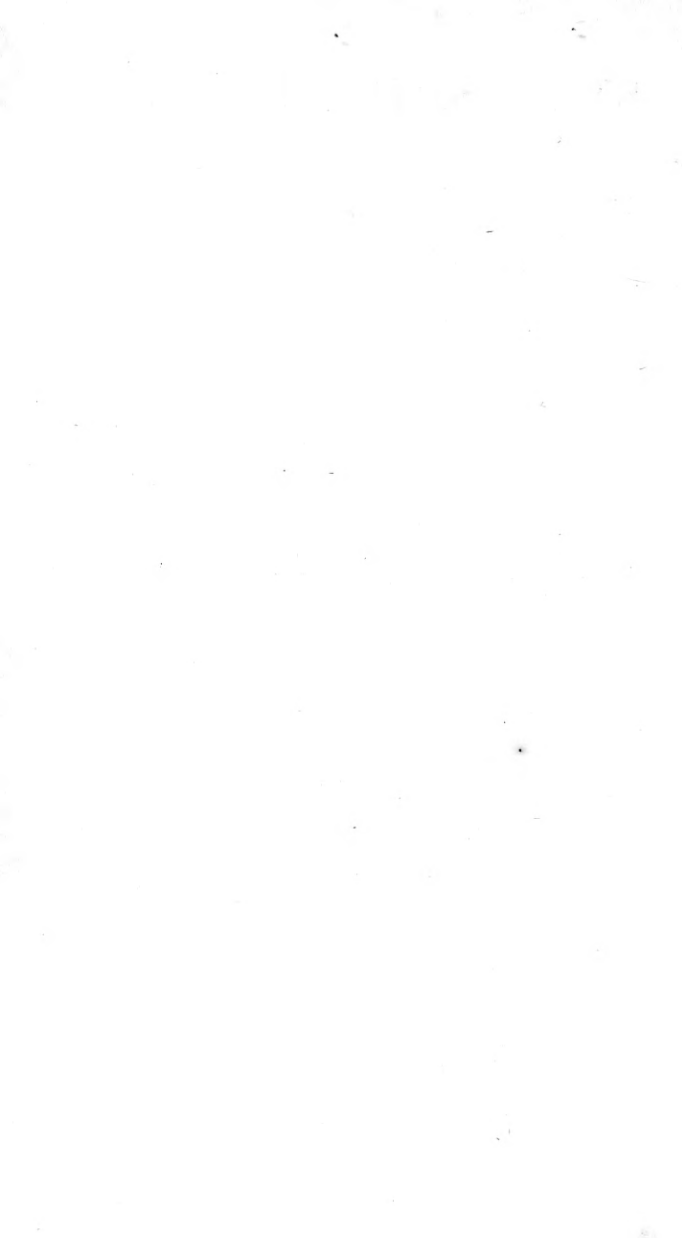
VOL. I.

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STOKESHILL PLACE;

OR

THE MAN OF BUSINESS.

CHAPTER I.

Well!—I cannot last for ever!—I were better to be eaten to death with rust, than to be scoured to nothing with perpetual motion.

SHAKSPEARE.

“THE horses are at the door, Sir,” said a spruce, well-powdered footman, throwing open the library of Stokeshill Place, where sat his master Mr. Barnsley, before a writing table covered with papers;—immersed in the business of the county and country, which left him little leisure to attend to his own.

A quarter of an hour—half an hour elapsed; and still Mr. Barnsley, deaf to the hint, hung pen in hand, over his desk; when John, not having chosen to notice the nod addressed in reality to his announcement, but apparently to the quire of writing paper occupying his master's attention, again ventured to intrude, with an intimation that the horses were waiting. The "Very well" vouchsafed in reply, was now too distinctly audible to admit of further interference.

John retired in despair to the servants' hall; satisfied that the mare, which by his master's orders had been saddled precisely at two o'clock to ride over to Westerton, was fated to stand in the shade of the great chesnut-tree gracing the court-yard, till the arrival of the post hour should give the signal for Mr. Barnsley's release from his epistolary labours.

But John, who had engagements of his own to which he wished to be more punctual, could not patiently resign himself to the

loss of his cricket match ; and when the stable clock chimed a quarter to four, he once more made his appearance in the library— screening himself from his master's displeasure, under the sacred character of a herald, by requesting to know, in the name of Robert the groom, whether “ the mare would be wanted ? ”

Thus apostrophized, Mr. Barnsley looked wistfully from his Bath post, towards the library time-piece ; and perceiving the hands to be advancing towards five o'clock, when he himself ought to have been advancing towards the town of Westerton at the hour of three, started up, desired John to light his taper, and hastily sealing the three letters already completed, placed them in post-bag array, and shut up the unfinished fourth in his desk.

“ Are the horses to come round, Sir ? ”—inquired John, fancying himself already at the wickets on Stokeshill Green.

“ No !—desire Miss Barnsley to step into the library.”

“ And Miss Winston, Sir ? ” demanded John ; who, accustomed to see his young lady constantly attended by her governess, had begun to regard them as swan and shadow.

“ No !—only Miss Margaret. Tell her that I am in haste, and wish to see her immediately.”

And while John hurried across the hall and vestibule towards the morning-room in which the young lady of Stokeshill and her preceptress usually passed the morning, Mr. Barnsley gathered together the hat, gloves, and riding-cane, prepared for him by the footman ; and with the hat on his head and cane under his arm, stood drawing on his gloves at the window, as if in the utmost hurry for departure, when Margaret’s gentle step traversed the floor, and his daughter stood beside him.

“ You sent for me, papa ? ”

“ Yes my dear. I have, unfortunately, only a few moments to spare. I am in the greatest haste—two hours behind-hand in an appoint-

ment with Dobbs and the surveyors at Westerton, about the new toll-house! But it is indispensable that I should say a word to you, Margaret, before I go out. I have received a letter, since breakfast, from Mr. Sullivan, of Hawkhurst, proposing for you, for his son Edward."

"*Proposing for me.*—Edward Sullivan?"

"Edward Sullivan!—I don't wonder you are surprised. I was amazed myself. A year or two hence might have been time enough to think of such a thing. However, the proposal is made, and must of course be answered. Old Sullivan has done things as handsomely as his estate and nature would allow. He undertakes to settle a thousand a year; but I need not trouble you with particulars. Indeed, I am in such a confounded hurry, that it is impossible to explain myself more fully; but while I am at Westerton, you and Miss Winston can make out a civil letter to the young man, stating how much you feel honoured,

and so forth. About your motives for refusing him, you can say what you like ;—that you feel too young to think of matrimony,—that you do not wish to quit me at present,—in short, what you please.”

“ But *must* I write ?” demanded Margaret, with a deep blush. “ Surely, as Mr. Sullivan referred himself to *you*, the answer ought to come from yourself.”

“ Oh ! there was a letter enclosed from Ned Sullivan,—a young man’s nonsensical letter. I have locked it up somewhere in my desk, I will give it you another time. You must, of course, express yourself grateful for the kind sentiments it contains ; and tell him that you are not. . . . but Miss Winston will instruct you better than I can what it is the custom for young ladies to say on such occasions. Let the letter be written before I come back, Margaret ; for I shall send off one of the men to Hawkhurst, as soon as possible. There are some ugly holes in the lane between the woodlands and the

common ; and I scarcely like to venture one of my horses there on a dark night. There is no moon, I think ?”

“ No, papa.”

“ Then make haste, my dear, and write your letter. Let them know, in the servants hall; that dinner must be put back till seven o’clock. I shan’t get away from Westerton till half-past six.”

And clapping his hat upon his head, and buttoning his coat with a fussy, anxious jerk, away went Barnsley to squabble with parish-surveyors and overseers ; leaving his gentle Margaret to do battle against her scarcely less uneasy meditations.

Instead of returning immediately to the governess and the carpet-work, as by his leaving open the library door her father probably anticipated, Margaret closed it gently, and returned to the library chair just vacated by Mr. Barnsley.

She had received a shock not instantly to be

overcome. Margaret was just seventeen ; had never been at a ball ; and the nearest approach to a novel placed within her reach was the incomparable, but certainly not romance-inspiring Robinson Crusoe. Her notions of love were purely instinctive ; her notions of marriage, the matter of fact suggestions of the governess. Miss Winston had sometimes vaguely alluded to the period of her being “ settled in life,” just as in earlier childhood she had announced the probability of measles and whooping-cough. But any minute consideration of so forbidden and delicate a topic, was out of the question.

Margaret had, from time to time, been disturbed in her lessons of geography and chronology by her father coming in with news that his friend Sullivan’s niece, or his friend Holloway’s daughter was going to be married ; and Margaret being aware that Lady Maria Burckhurst had attained her eight and twentieth year, and that Eliza Holloway had been for ten long seasons the belle of Canterbury races, con-

cluded that marriage was an event not likely to disturb the smooth domestic economy of Stokeshill, for full ten years to come. She felt that she must “come out;” must appear at a given number of races and assize balls, music-meetings and archery meetings, before the subject need enter into her calculations.

The thunderbolt, however, had fallen!—She had actually received an offer,—had been inadvertently, and without warning, on the eve of “being settled!”—Had her father so willed it, a few weeks might have seen her Mrs. Edward Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill! A thrill of surprise, almost of terror, passed through her heart, as she leaned her elbow on the writing table and her head upon her hand, to contemplate all the responsibilities she had been on the point of incurring!

With Edward Sullivan she had fancied herself, the preceding evening, intimately acquainted. During the last two years, Edward had been a frequent visitor at Stokeshill; and

she had even noticed his habit of fixing himself at the tea-table or work-table with Miss Winston and herself, in preference to joining the group of politicians or parish-icians so apt to dispute away the evening after her father's dinner-parties,—highly commending his distaste for these wrangling wittagemots of the country gentlemen, their neighbours. But hitherto, his habit of joining Mr. Barnsley and Mr. Barnsley's daughter in their daily ride, had escaped her notice. Hawkhurst and Stokeshill being but five miles apart, she thought nothing more natural than that they should frequently meet in the woods and green lanes intervening. But Margaret now espied design where previously she had discerned only accident. She saw that Edward Sullivan had been seeking her society, when she fancied him intent only on escaping the pompous monotony of his father's house at Hawkhurst. She saw in short, that she had been wooed without knowing it; and sought as a wife, where she was scarcely conscious of

being preferred as an acquaintance. Yes! Edward Sullivan had actually proposed to make her his; to pass his life with her; to unite their destinies for ever!

But were their destinies, if thus united, likely to have proved happy?—Margaret raised her blushing cheek from her hand as she asked herself the question; for though alone, she blushed at familiarly entertaining an idea from which Miss Winston had scrupulously taught her to recede; and though excused to her conscience, by the great event of the day, for pausing to contemplate the subject, she was forced to admit herself a very incompetent judge of the question. What did she know of Edward, more than that he was a good shot, that he had a good seat on horse-back, a good countenance, and tolerably good address; and that he was the second son of Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill, one of the wealthiest proprietors of the county of Kent? They were neighbours' children, it is true, and had occa-

sionally met in familiar acquaintance as long as Margaret could remember. But the greater part of Edward's life was passed at Harrow and Oxford; and his sojourns at home had left a deeper impression on his own feelings than on those of Margaret Barnsley.

After half an hour's meditation upon his moral qualities and endowments, Margaret was forced to confess, that of the Edward Sullivan with whom the day before she had fancied herself so well acquainted, she knew little or nothing.

A second time she blushed, while admitting to herself that she should have liked to see and study Edward's letter of proposal, before she proceeded to reply. But she feared there might be impropriety in suggesting this to her father.

Her father had desired her to confer with Miss Winston touching the *terms* of her rejection; but no choice had been supposed possible; nor did Margaret feel injured by so

peremptory a disposal of her destinies. She felt conscious that she was too young to marry—too young to be allowed to deliberate on such a point ; for Edward had found no opportunity to enlarge her sense of her own rights or sensibilities.

All these cogitations ended in the recollection, that her letter was to be ready before her father's return from Westerton ; and Margaret, sighing as she rose from the table, found that the time was come for consulting Miss Winston.

For the first time in her life, she felt disinclined to make Miss Winston's opinion as finite as a Median or Persian decree. She was persuaded her governess would be shocked that any one should have ventured to make a proposal of marriage to a child like herself ; to her pupil—her automaton ;—who had not yet quite completed her course of universal history, and was still occasionally reprov'd for the uneven stitches in her embroidery.

Still, the thing must be done. It was nearly six o'clock. The butler made his appearance in the library, to fetch the letters for the post-bag ; and Margaret, as she took her father's three epistles from the writing table and placed them in Lawton's hand, perceived that one was addressed to John Fagg, Esq., Solicitor, 14, Lincoln's Inn ; one to the Secretary of the Salamander Insurance Company ; and one to the adjutant of the county militia.

Such was the urgency of the correspondence which had left Mr. Barnsley only seven minutes and three seconds, to debate with his only child on a measure involving her happiness for life !

CHAPTER II.

The line of many a pedigree is lost in a mob of tradesmen, or a crowd of rustics : like the old Appian Way, which, after running many miles with majesty, loses itself in a bog.

ADDISON.

JOHN, the Cricketer, was probably the only one at Stokeshill, whose rest that night was uninfluenced by the great event of the day. While *his* dreams were cheered by reminiscences of the innings of the morning, Margaret's serenity of mind was disturbed by striving to recal the exact terms in which she had attempted to convey her refusal to Edward Sullivan, without infraction of those dignities of

the sex impressed upon her observance by Miss Winston. Barnsley lay awake nearly five minutes weighing the eligibilities of the divers chaperons within his reach, to undertake the first introduction of his daughter to society at the fêtes about to take place at Wynnex Abbey;—while the midnight cogitations of the poor governess, were of a far less cheering description.

For twelve years past, Miss Winston had formed part of the establishment at Stokeshill; and Mr. Barnsley's engagement, that she should continue in the family till the marriage of her pupil, had seemed to promise happiness of half-a-dozen years' stability. She had been promoted to her office from a teachership at a boarding-school; and there was nothing in her former experience of the privations of life, to reconcile her to her prospects of penurious independence.

On quitting Mr. Barnsley's roof, her income would consist of one hundred and fifty pounds

a year, two-thirds of which arose from an annuity settled upon her by her patron;—her prospects in life of—a blank ! Her existence had been an easy one. Margaret was an affectionate, submissive child,— Mr. Barnsley too much occupied with county and parish business to interfere with her arrangements; and beyond Stokeshill, her pupil, and her pupil's father, she had not a tie on earth ! For the governess insulated for twelve years in the family of which she is the hireling, abjures all connection with the external world. (Yet, in her desolate fiftieth year, she may be cast forth into the wilderness of the world; while high and low applaud the liberality of those who have doled out scanty bread to secure the remainder of her days from starvation.)

There were moments, indeed, when poor Miss Winston felt that she should obtain an exceeding rich reward for all her self-denial, in the excellent results of the education she had bestowed on Margaret. But under the present

shock of discovering that she might be called upon to resign her five years before she had calculated on any such calamity, all she could do was to weep a few bitter tears, and hope for the best.

“ Margaret is very much grown, lately,” observed Mr. Barnsley, the following morning, at breakfast, laying down the newspaper which, according to the laudable custom of English gentlemen, he was in the habit of reading during the meal, so as to necessitate silence among the rest of the party.

“ Do you think so, Sir ?” replied Miss Winston. “ She holds herself better than last year ; which may make a difference.”

“ You will soon be seventeen, I fancy ?” resumed Barnsley, addressing his daughter, whose face was suffused with blushes at finding herself the object of such unusual consideration.

“ My birth-day was last month, papa,” replied Margaret. And, as the day which witnessed the birth of his only child had also

made him a widower, some surprise arose in even Miss Winston's unexcitable mind, that the anniversary should be so easily overlooked by Mr. Barnsley.

"Last month?—the 15th of September?—ay, very true! It must have been when I was over at Maidstone, at the sessions; it wholly escaped my memory. I have always intended, Margaret, that at seventeen you should take the head of my table. Miss Winston, of course, will see the propriety of my wish. We will begin from to-day."

"Indeed, papa," said Margaret, in a remonstrating voice, "I feel so—"

"My dear, your papa wishes it," interrupted Miss Winston; and with Miss Winston, Margaret never presumed to remonstrate.

"Henceforward, my dear," resumed her father, pursuing his own train of reflections, "I shall look to *you* as mistress of my establishment. With Miss Winston's advice, you will undertake the control of the house. At

the end of the month, too, there is to be a ball at Wynnex Abbey, in honor of Lord Shoreham's coming of age ; it will be an excellent opportunity for your introduction to the county. It is time, Margaret, you should learn something of the world. By the way, my dear, remind me to write you out a draft for you on Closeman, after breakfast. You must have a new set of dresses, and I shall desire Hamlet, (who has promised me the new icepails and tureens for next week) to send down a few ornaments for your selection. What stones do you prefer?"

Margaret looked 'towards Miss Winston for a reply.

"Pink-topazes are very pretty," suggested the governess—"I think, my dear, you would like pink topazes."

"I am not fond of ornaments, papa," said Margaret, venturing, for once, to have an opinion of her own.

"You have never yet had occasion to be

full-dressed. Now you are coming out, you must appear as becomes Miss Barnsley of Stokeshill. *My* daughter must not be less handsomely set off than others of our position in the county."

"As you are so kind as to give me my choice, then," said Margaret, taking courage, "I should prefer a pearl necklace."

And the submissive girl, who had not presumed to have an opinion of her own in the choice of her husband, trembled at having ventured to express a preference in the selection of a necklace.

It happened to be the day of the weekly justice-meeting at Westerton; and immediately after breakfast, Mr Barnsley's horses were again announced by John. The justice-meeting was to Barnsley, what the Italian Opera may be supposed to be to a fine lady; and away went papa, his head cleared of all thought of drafts or necklaces, by the necessity of arming himself with certain parochial documents

to be laid before his brother magistrates, Mr. Holloway of Whitshamstead Hall, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill, and Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge. Even his favorite mare, as she stood at the door, seemed to have imbibed the fidgety, fussy air, assumed by her master on these memorable days—the golden ones of the calendar to the man of business.

Barnsley was, in fact, a notable exemplification of the adage, that—

Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.

His father, a man retired from trade with sufficient fortune to make himself comfortable without the ambition of making himself ridiculous, had procured for his eldest son a cavalry commission in India, and given to John, his youngest, a plain, useful education at the Tonbridge Grammar School ; where he was likely to form no aristocratic connections to inspire him with a taste for a betting, instead of a day-book, or the St. Leger instead of the ledger.

Young John, who, like his father, possessed a calculating head, having obtained meanwhile one of the exhibitions attached to the Tonbridge school, entertained ardent hopes of stamping his scholarship current by a degree at the university, preparatory to entering one of the learned professions. But the old man had too much worldly wisdom under his Welch wig to hazard any such precarious attempt.

“My money’s of my own making; and Kitty, Sally, and Jane, must share and share alike with Clement and yourself. Each of you will touch a matter of five thousand pounds; which won’t do to fall back upon, in case of failure in a profession,” quoth the old man, when applying his paternal shears to the wings of John Barnsley’s ambition; “so I’ve just articulated you, my boy, to my old friends Winchmore and Trannis, of the Adelphi, as respectable a house of business in the attorney line, as any in Lon’on town. Take my word for’t,

Jack, they'll put you in the way of making good bread."

Against such a sentence, John knew there was no appeal: and thus,—nailed to the desk—his aspirations soon limited themselves to the level of the high horse-hair stool, on which the remainder of his youth was to be pounce-and-parchmented away. Barnsley, from a steady lad, became a prudent young man; and fortune, whose mysterious wheel rolls its way into such strange holes and corners, found means to detect John Barnsley in his obscure office in the Adelphi.

It happened that Mr. Abraham Trannis, who, despite his three-score years and twelve, rejoiced in the title of junior partner in the firm of Winchmore and Co., was a rich oddity—*very* rich and *very* odd—such as the present century has beheld only in the impersonations of Munden. Late in life, he had married his housekeeper, and lost her too soon after the

marriage, to find leisure for repentance ; more especially as she had bequeathed him a daughter, to afford some excuse to himself in quitting the world, for the rigid parsimony and devotion to business by which he had rendered his sojourn there a period of penance.

But in the course of his long attorneyship, Trannis had obtained so much insight into the perils and dangers environing an heiress's career, that as Mary advanced towards womanhood and his daily glance at his looking glass showed him his well worn caxon a world too wide for his shrunk cheeks, he grew uneasy at the notion of leaving his daughter and his ducats to the mercy of the fops of the west end. He wished to see her settled before he died; and, as his ambition extended rather to the preservation of his hoard than to its augmentation, could think of nothing better than to treat with his old friend Barnsley for his steady son John to become his son-in-law, just as his friend Barnsley had treat-

ed with himself to make the said John his clerk.

The matter was speedily arranged. To Barnsley's prospective five thousand pounds, the prudent attorney added five and twenty thousand down, by way of dowry ; and the promise of his share in the business and the remainder of his fortune, at his decease. The amount of that remainder had often afforded a topic of conjecture to the clerks in his office, as they gossipped, with their quills behind their ears, during the luncheon of their principals. John Barnsley had heard it surmised at fifty thousand pounds ; and as his heart was somewhat of the consistency of one of the skins of parchment which his life was passed in engrossing, the proposition of the old gentleman was accepted with as much avidity, as is the mitre of Durham by the lowliest minded of *nolo episcoparians*.

When, on the following Sunday, Mary Trans was introduced into her father's dining room,

from the boarding school at Kensington from whence she was chaperoned by Miss Winston, then one of the teachers, John Barnsley beheld a fair, delicate, elegant girl,—he was perhaps the only young man on whom fortune could have heaped such an excess of favours, without inspiring the sentiment that the lovely bride, thus forced upon his acceptance, was the most precious of them all.

What Mary thought of her intended husband is comparatively unimportant; the old gentleman was delighted. The Barnsley family exerted themselves to the utmost to do honour to so auspicious an alliance. Their house was thrown open for feasting and hospitality; and old Mr. Trannis, after a round of dinners with the father, grand-mother, uncles and aunts of his son-in-law, caught an inflammatory cold from the too frequent use of his silk waistcoat and Sunday wig,—and died!

Had the event occurred only five weeks before, Mary Trannis would have found herself

heiress to one hundred and thirty five thousand pounds, encumbered only with her fair person and feminine disposition. As it was, her noble inheritance was rendered abortive by a husband of vulgar mind and disagreeable manners.—Her fate was sealed.

Even amidst the pre-occupation arising from his extraordinary accession of property, young Barnsley found leisure to note that his young wife was of what he considered a sadly moping disposition. His sisters observed, that Mrs. John had weak spirits; his father, that she had weak health. But a convenient solution was found for her despondency, in the recent death of her father; and it argued strongly in honour of filial instinct, that her tears should flow so abundantly for the loss of a parent seventy three years of age, with whom, during her whole lifetime, she had never held half an hour's uninterrupted conversation.

In the course of six months, however, Mrs. Barnsley's countenance put forth a rainbow!

Her husband, whose love of consequence exceeded even his love of business, having determined to render the Trannis share of the Adelphi office a sleeping partnership, purchased a beautiful estate in the county of Kent. His chum, at the Tonbridge grammar school, was the son of a certain Sir Ralph Woodgate, of Stokeshill Place, near Westerton; and Barnsley's spleen and envy had often been excited by his schoolfellows vauntings of the Baronet's manorial rights, and the magnificence of the halls, parlours, paddocks, and preserves of Stokeshill Place. In the absence of some grounds for reciprocal boast, Stokeshill was a sharp thorn in Barnsley's side. He grew to consider it a finer thing than Eridge, Knowle, Penshurst, or even Windsor Castle; and when, a few months after the opening of old Trannis's will, a newspaper advertisement acquainted him that the said estate of Stokeshill, with its manors, halls, parlours, paddocks and preserves, was to be sold by private contract,

Barnsley concluded his bargain for the long coveted territory with such unattorneyish precipitancy, that the outlay of thirty five thousand pounds was supposed to exceed the positive value of the purchase, by nearly fifteen hundred.

Even this extra expenditure, however, brought its rate of interest; for young Mrs. Barnsley, so sad and so silent in London, recovered some degree of health and spirits from the moment of settling in the country. She, whose young life had been droned away between a city and its suburbs, now tasted for the first time the enjoyment of fields and flowers, of shade and sunshine. The gardens and woods of Stokeshill seemed to animate her into new existence. She was almost well,—almost happy,—almost cheerful;—and Mary's character had just begun to adapt itself to the mechanical routine of her new duties, when her innocent life was required of her;—she died in giving birth to a daughter!—

CHAPTER III.

Qui a terre, a guerre.

PROVERB.

THE new proprietor of Stokeshill Place, to whom his young wife had been always Mrs. Barnsley, never Mary, and who respected her as the origin of his opulence, rather than as a being to be surrounded with the adoration which youthful bridegrooms lavish on such fair and gentle creatures, wore his broad hems with becoming gravity; engaged an excellent nurse for his little girl; and when the time for tuition came, sought out, as her governess, the favourite teacher under whose chaperon-

ship he had first been presented to her mother.

This was a sacrifice on the part of Barnsley. Seven years had elapsed since his first introduction to Miss Winston; and he was now disencumbered of every domestic tie associated with that ignoble epoch. For five years past, he had been a country gentleman. His parents were dead, his sisters married, and all his Barnsley and Trannis connexions obliterated. He had formed new friendships and acquaintanceships, of a degree correspondent with his higher modes of life.

Yet it was not excess of virtue that induced him to overlook the disadvantage of introducing into his establishment, almost the only surviving person familiar with the rise of his condition. His honours had come to sit too closely upon him, and were based on too strong a foundation, to admit of the smallest solicitude as to his place in public opinion. His selection of his wife's teacher to become gover-

ness to her daughter, arose from his experience of the dry, sober, uninquiring, uninterfering, character of the elderly spinster ; and perhaps in some degree, from the hurried occupations which left him no leisure to seek out a more accomplished preceptress.

For Barnsley, in renouncing his professional business, seemed to have adapted that of all the world !—Young as he was, when he took possession of Stokeshill, he soon found himself to be the best man of business in the neighbourhood, and the neighbourhood confirmed his discovery. The habits of his clerkship clung to him. Vestry, quorum, electioneering,—he dealt with all and every thing like an attorney ; not interestedly, or unfairly,—but litigiously and pragmatically. The country gentlemen, his neighbours, respected him ; some as a man of probity,—some as a man of five thousand a year.—They knew vaguely that that he had been “ bred to the law ;” as were many men of fortune and family, fifty years

ago, with a view to the legislation of their estates and the country; and his legal knowledge and lawyer-like activity, both of pen and person, if they rendered him occasionally a troublesome neighbour, rendered him, in the long run, a very useful acquaintance.

By the time Barnsley of Stokeshill had attained his forty fifth year, the usual vicissitudes, brought about by the lapse of twenty years in every country neighbourhood, were perceptible in that of Westerton. Of the families which had witnessed his inauguration, some were dispersed, some extinct; and in all but two instances, a new generation was reigning, in the stead of the one contemporaneous with his arrival at Stokeshill. Those who were later settlers in the county than himself, knew or cared little about the date of his naturalization; and the three great lawgivers of the district, (Lord Shoreham, who, from his rank,—old Holloway, who from his landed property;—and Sullivan who, from his antiquity of descent, might

be suspected of cherishing disparaging sentiments towards the displacer of Sir Richard Woodgate), found him far too useful a neighbour to be treated with disrespect.

In certain times and places, he was in fact invaluable. Assizes, elections, road-bill committees, and turnpike meetings, confessed his influence; and, business apart, if indeed business could ever be a thing apart from Barnsley, he could boast good preserves on his manor, good wine in his cellar, a good understanding with the gentlemen of the neighbouring hunt, and a good account with the bankers of the neighbouring town. From Wynnex Abbey down to Cinnamon Lodge, there was, accordingly, always a spare bed for Barnsley,—always a place at dinner parties for Barnsley—for Barnsley was a fellow who gave no trouble, and took infinite trouble for all the world. Had half the business he transacted, as an amateur at Stokeshill Place, been transacted in the John Doe and Richard Roe line, in the office from

which even his sleeping partnership was now brought out, Barnsley would have doubled his income, though perhaps at the expence of his popularity.

Little as people are inclined to receive advice volunteered as that of a friend, most men love a legal opinion which they can get for nothing ; and Barnsley's was known, by long experience, to be as good as the best to be had for money. Scarcely a country squire throughout England but has some pet lawsuit on his hands. In addition to his kinsfolk and acquaintance, tithes and tenants array against him new enemies for prosecution ;—trespasses upon his grounds not being classed among those towards which he is enjoined to forgiveness by the canons of the christian faith. But from the moment Barnsley settled himself in the hundred of Westerton, all its outstanding aggressions and grievances became trebly apparent; while others sprang daily to light, which had hitherto been microscopically

undiscoverable. Pathways and causeways, rights of common and fishery, long abused and long neglected, were reclaimed and recovered under his auspices; and as the adviser of such recoveries was known to derive no profit from the law, (though, as Closeman the wag of Westerton was heard to observe, he seemed to give the law to the profits,) he escaped the ignominy and ill-will usually attached to his vocation.

Many people were surprised that a man of so stirring a turn of mind, did not dignify his habits of activity by devoting them to the service of the country. But Barnsley had fixed his fancy upon a certain road into parliament, and no other afforded him the least temptation. As yet, reformed representation was not; but Westerton was an open borough, displaying its openness like other boroughs of the time, by returning the two wealthiest landed proprietors within a certain distance of its town hall.

When Barnsley set up his staff at Stokeshill, the two sitting members were, Holloway and Sullivan, both in the prime of life; and the only hope of a vacancy consisted in the possibility of Mr. Holloway's elevation to the peerage; or a breach between Sullivan and his constituents, occasioned by some outbreak of his haughty temper. Neither the one nor the other had yet occurred.

Still, Barnsley hoped on. Holloway and Sullivan, now styled in parlance of the borough "our old, and respected members," were breaking up under the influence of sedentary committees and a parliamentary atmosphere; and from session to session, from dissolution to dissolution, Barnsley's expectations of impending senatorship grew more distinct. Like some distant mansion forming at first a speck in the horizon, of which the progress of our journey makes gradually apparent the portico and windows, the door of the House of Commons seemed at length to stand open

to John Barnsley, as “the honourable member for Westerton.”

For the hundredth time, he complimented his own forbearance in having eschewed all other modes of sneaking into parliament. Not a dissolution for the last fifteen years, but he might have bought himself a seat with as much ease as one of the hall chairs of Stokeshill, on which, per condescension of the Herald’s Office, a lion’s head had been lately made to figure. But he had shunned the temptation; and preferred fulfilling towards old Holloway much such an office as that of coadjutor to a foreign archbishop, in order to keep up his interest with the borough. Westerton was Barnsley’s mark!—*Aut Westertoniensis aut nihil.*

The secret of all this partiality—a secret unsuspected even by himself—consisted in his jealousy of his predecessors at Stokeshill. The Woodgates had been “seated,” according to the phrase of road-books and county histories,

at Stokeshill Place, time out of mind ! In the reign of Richard II, Sir Ranulph de Woodgate of Stokeshill, had inscribed his name, with a gauntleted hand, on the then iron page of history ; and the family had been connected one way or other with the chronicles of the county, throughout the five, long, grey-bearded centuries thence ensuing. An ill-fated race,—they had subsisted, rather than flourished. No change of kings or ministers, men or measures, seemed to bring prosperity to the Woodgates. As the parchment of their genealogy extended, that of their rent-roll grew less. Their lands were unrenewed by the manure of commercial gold ; and every new scion of the ancient tree beheld a wood or a farm sacrificed, on the shooting of his branch. At length, nothing of all their feofs and manors remained to them but the estate of Stokeshill. Sir Ralph, the father of John Barnsley's playmate, had scarcely a thousand a year, and several sons to claim a division of the income ; till, at last, soon after

his attainment of his grandson's majority, the entail was of necessity cut off, the property sold;—and lo! John Barnsley reigned in his stead!

Some people were of opinion that necessity alone urged the son and grandson to the sacrifice; but others imagined that the pride of the Woodgates received a cruel blow in the loss of a contested election for Westerton, experienced, some years before, by Mr. Woodgate. Trusting to the influence which in former times had invariably assigned a seat for the borough to the Stokeshill family, he had stood, and been defeated by Mr. Holloway—a comparatively new man in the county; and though the high tory borough protested that its defection from the ancient banner arose from the leaning of Mr. Woodgate towards Catholic emancipation, the persons skilled in human nature and borough nature, were not slow to discover that the corporation could not afford to choose a representative residing in their immediate neighbour-

hood, having less than two thousand a year. They knew they should feast upon old Holloway's venison, where Woodgate would scarcely have afforded them mutton ; and were aware that Holloway's pine apples would be mere pippins at Stokeshill. Nay, Hardingwood Holloway's name was down for an annual subscription to their infirmary of two hundred pounds ; when the six goodly heirs of the house of Woodgate mustered between them only £5.5s.

The loss of the election, and the cause of the loss, were alike an offence to the humbled pride of the decayed family ; and, as the glory was departed from Stokeshill, the Woodgates saw fit to depart also.

Nothing seemed easier or smoother, to uninterested bystanders, than the mode in which Mr. Barnsley had taken their place, by becoming, by fair and public purchase, proprietor of the estate ; yet *he* found plagues and perplexities in his instalment, of which the world knew nothing.

The village of Stokeshill, in former centuries a feof of the house of Woodgate, still retained an indelible impression of its supremacy. The place was full of the fame of their former greatness. The church boasted their sepulchral monuments; the almshouses, the very fount in the market-place, their image and superscription. A hand holding a rose—the Lancastrian badge of old Sir Ranulph de Woodgate—was still the ensign of the little inn; and certain invalided out-pensioned servants of the family, still haunted the spot, preserving in all their vividness, legends and memories of the past. Even the independent farmers of the neighbourhood, whose forefathers had gradually bought off their property from under the crumbling sceptre of the Woodgates, affected to uphold their empire, in opposition to the upstart, their successor. John Barnsley, the quondam attorney, might dine with Lord Shoreham, and shoot with Squire Sullivan; but Giles Hawkins, of Loughlands Marsh, and

Dick Abdy, of Woodman's farm, remained true to the rallying cry of "Woodgate for ever !"

In short, though Barnsley's money had been the means of restoring comfort and respectability to the Woodgate family, and though he had never interchanged an ungracious word with any member of it in the course of his existence, he found himself detested at Stokes-hill, as at once their enemy and an usurper !

The Woodgates were incessantly thrown in his teeth. "It was not so in the time of the good old family," was constantly inflicted upon him. All the resistances and redressments suggested by his legal knowledge to the county at large, seemed retaliated upon himself in his own parish. A right of pathway across his lawn, which had been long suffered to fall into disuse, was now insisted upon by every red-hooded dame trudging with her basket of eggs to Westerton market ; and to all his concessions and remonstrances, the only answer he could

obtain from Hawkins, Abdy, and their confederates, was :

“ Yes, Mr. Barnsley, all *that* is very well ; but you see, Sir, though the old family mayn’t have known as much of *law* as you do, they knew something of justice ; and what’s more, if they had proved grudgers to the poor, like some people, they wouldn’t have been forced to make way at Stokeshill for folk as was never heard of, from Adam, in the county of Kent.”

All this was wormwood to Barnsley. The very name of Woodgate came to be hateful to his ears. If he bought a new horse, a whisper reached him that the Woodgates had a breeding stud of their own. If a new service of plate came down to him from town, what was it to the old family plate of the Woodgates ? A beautiful likeness of his daughter was hung up in the drawing room at Stokeshill ; and he was soon afterwards informed by old Mr. Hawkins, that when the family pictures of the

Woodgates were sold, previous to the disposal of the property, the Holbeinses had been bought for the gallery at Knowle, and the Vandykes for the King. He could not assume a taste, or affect a possession, but these hateful Woodgates had been beforehand with him !

Such was the motive which induced his earnest desire to become member of parliament for the borough of Westerton. There at least he might rise superior ! The last of the Woodgates had been rejected, where the first of the Barnsleys was likely to be joyfully accepted :—it was from him that Stokeshill would derive the honour of being designated as the seat of the member for Westerton :—the Hand and Flower must for once give place to the Lion's Head. Mighty as was the memory of the Woodgates in the Stokeshill house of Industry, the name of John Barnsley would be greater still in His Majesty's House of Commons. A baronetcy would have been no acquisition to him, their own being three centuries antedated ;

the urgent point was, to be elected on the very huntings where Richard Woodgate had been lag of the poll!

This devoutly-wished consummation was now at hand. Mr. Holloway's elevation to the peerage, formally announced by the opposition papers, was so gravely contradicted by the tory prints, that it was plain the catastrophe was imminent. October was in progress; November was to behold the meeting and prorogation of parliament; and previous to its re-assembling for business, Hardingwood Holloway would probably become Lord Withamstead, and John Barnsley member for Westerton.

Now, although as self-secure of his seat as if he had been already flogged in from the lobby to half a hundred ministerial divisions, Barnsley judged it expedient that his popularity should be at the brightest at the moment he was elevated on the pedestal of notoriety. His well-known brown mare was accordingly constantly seen in the High street of Westerton.

He suddenly discovered that the bedrooms at Stokeshill required new grates, and bespoke at Timmins's in the Market Place a sufficient supply of pokers and tongs to have formed a charivari; and in spite of Miss Winston's assurances that the linen-presses were overflowing, sent home from the linen draper's a bale or two of handsome damask. Dobbs and Snobbs, the attorneys,—Squills and Catkin, the apothecaries, Mr. and Mrs. Holdfast, the vicar and vicaress, nay, even Dumpkins the curate, and Snubbem, the schoolmaster, were successively invited to dine at Stokeshill;—poor Barnsley seemed determined to embrace in his hospitalities the vast firm of Westerton and Co.!

Not that there was the slightest surmise of an opposition to his return; but he felt there was something honourable in being cheered into parliament by the acclamations of an admiring borough.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Barnsley

could not but regard Edward Sullivan's proposals for the hand of his daughter, as an untoward event. Oleagiously as he had handled his refusal, the pride of proud Sullivan of Hawkhurst must have been grievously hurt by the rejection of his son. The Sullivans would doubtless refrain from gracing with their presence the ovation of his chairing ; and Barnsley almost wished he had not rendered his negative so positive ; that he had merely declared his daughter's indifference, and suffered young Sullivan to prosecute his suit, at least till after the election.

But Edward was young and handsome ; and the secluded life hitherto led by Margaret might expose her youthful susceptibility to some danger from such a courtship ; while the public avowal of his pretensions might perhaps prevent others from aspiring to her hand.

In short, the mischief was done !—Edward was definitively refused, and the gauntlet thrown down to the Sullivans. Barnsley had only to

double his assiduities in other quarters; and afford new justification for the title waggishly bestowed upon him by his neighbour Closeman, of “the busiest B. in the county.”

Meanwhile, the movements of this active domestic machinery were wholly invisible to Margaret. By her father she had never been admitted to the confidence of affectionate intercourse; Stokeshill was as a barren and a dry land, where no love is. As a child, he occasionally questioned her of her studies; as a young woman, escorted her in a daily ride, during which they discoursed of the weather, or the village, and its necessities; but he seemed neither to rejoice in her growing virtues, nor exult in her increasing beauty. There was no tenderness in his nature, either for her or any other human being. His idol was his own prosperity; his occupation, the business by which he fancied it to be secured.

Miss Winston, too, contributed her grain of sand to the aridity of the desert. Having tact enough to perceive that Barnsley would be

displeased to find his daughter initiated into the details of his early life, she never spoke to Margaret of her mother. Miss Barnsley knew not whether the opulence surrounding her, descended from her maternal or paternal ancestors; she was, in fact, better acquainted with the pedigree of the Woodgates, on which her venerable pensioners of the village were constantly enlarging in her presence, than with her own.

Like a flower, flourishing under the influence of the sunshine and the rain, she had grown to womanhood in that bright, pure spirit of unworldliness, so beautiful to the spectator, so perilous to the possessor; and poor Miss Winston, though in her heart keenly alive to the merits of her pupil, did not rise superior to the boarding-school dictum, that too much reserve cannot be kept up between young people and those condemned to be their admonitors. Tenderly as she loved Margaret Barnsley, she would have held it highly blameable to evince any token of sensibility in her favour.

CHAPTER IV.

Thou speakest wiser than thou art 'ware of.

SHAKSPEARE.

“LADY SHOREHAM’s invitation-card is come, at last,” observed Margaret to Miss Winston, as they sat at the two extremities of an immense carpet frame, in which they were concocting together, at the price of ten guineas, and half a year’s leisure, a library-chair cover.

“Indeed? — Where is it?” — said the governess, with more curiosity than she was wont to display on such subjects.

“John brought it to papa as we were walking together in the shrubbery after breakfast.

I dare say he put it in his pocket with the letters he was reading."

"And how was the invitation worded?" inquired Miss Winston, a little anxious concerning the position she was to hold between the country neighbours and her pupil on the entrance of the latter into society; whether to be invited out as companion, or left at home as superannuated governess.

"Very strangely, I assure you," replied the unsuspecting Margaret. "It was a printed card. — 'Lady Shoreham At Home, on Wednesday the 22nd of October; Morning, Noon and Night.' — Papa tells me there is to be a breakfast at twelve o'clock; after which, the villagers will be feasted in tents in the park, which, if the weather is favourable, we are to walk out and see. At six, a grand dinner; and immediately afterwards, a ball for the tenants in the hall, and another for the guests in the painted ball room."

“ What an effort — what an expense !” ejaculated Miss Winston. “ How terribly fatigued you will all be !”

“ *You ?*—Shall you not accompany me, then !”

“ I am not aware of being invited.”

“ Oh, yes ! there was a separate card for yourself. Papa was so full of business that he did not give the subject much attention, but put your invitation into his pocket with the other. You will go, will you not ?”

“ I shall consult Mr. Barnsley’s wishes on the subject,” replied Miss Winston, primly. “ If he considers it desirable for me to attend you, I shall obey him.”

“ Oh, indeed I could not think of going without you !” cried Margaret, trembling at the anticipation of such an enterprise. “ Papa, who has always so much business to talk of with Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Holloway, and the rest

of them, would perhaps leave me quite alone ; or worse still, give me in charge to Lady Shoreham, of whom I am so horribly afraid !”

“ But it is time, my dear Miss Barnsley, you should get over these childish apprehensions.”

“ Don’t call me Miss Barnsley, or I shall feel that I have displeased you. Call me Margery, as you used when I was a little girl, and you were satisfied with my sampler ; and then I will try to acquire more confidence.”

“ How often must I remind you not to express yourself in such vulgar abbreviations as ‘ don’t,’ and ‘ shan’t,’ ” said Miss Winston, coldly. “ It is a most unlady-like habit.”

“ Well *do not* look so much displeased, and you *shall not* have cause to remind me of your prohibition,” said Margaret, smiling. “ But to return to Lady Shoreham.”

“ To return to Lady Shoreham,—be assured she will have too much on her hands on so eventful a day as the 22nd, to trouble you with her solitudes.”

“ An additional reason that you should not refuse to accompany me.”

“ My dear, I do *not* refuse ; I shall abide by Mr. Barnsley’s decision.”

“ I wonder,” said Margaret, after a short pause, “ whether Helen Sullivan and her mother will return from St. Leonards in time for this fête at the Abbey ?”

“ Indeed, I cannot say.”

“ I have been thinking, that very likely this foolish business about Edward may render them less cordial to me than they used to be,” continued Margaret, blushing deeply. “ I am very fond of Mrs. Sullivan and Helen. Of all our neighbours they are the only ones who have shown me more than formal kindness ; and I own I looked forward to their protection, on my first coming out. But all that, I fear, is over.”

“ Mrs. Sullivan has a sort of cajoling Irish manner, which strikes me as unnatural ;” said Miss Winston, stiffly. “ With several chil-

dren of her own, she cannot be so much interested about those of other people."

"She has known me from my birth," pleaded Margaret. "The first pleasure I can bring to mind, was going with Nurse Molyneux to spend a few days at Hawkhurst."

"Yes, I am aware that the projects of the family date from a remote epoch ; but as Mr. Barnsley justly observes, he is entitled to expect a better match for his heiress than a younger son."

"Am I an heiress ?"—demanded Margaret, with wondering eyes."

"Mr. Barnsley has a fine fortune, and you are his only child."

"You mean then, that I shall be an heiress after my father's death ? — But the Sullivans cannot have been so base as to calculate upon that !" cried Margaret, with a look of horror.

"Did they ever promote an intimacy between you and Mr. Sullivan Brereton, who has inherited Lord Brereton's Irish property ?"

“ Never,—which is a strong proof of their favour. Every body admits that Edward Sullivan is twice as good looking and agreeable as his elder brother.”

Miss Winston could not forbear smiling.

“ I understand very little of such matters,” resumed Margaret, provoked by her smile ; “ but I shall be greatly grieved if this unlucky business produce any coolness between the families.”

“ My dear ! have you got the blue worsted ? —that is the green you are giving me.”

“ I wonder whether Lord Shoreham is arrived yet at Wynnex Abbey,” said Margaret, rectifying her mistake.

“ I really cannot say.—Where are the scissors ?”

“ I think he would have called on my father. You know papa is a sort of guardian to Lord Shoreham.”

“ No, my dear,—only an executor to the late Viscount,” observed Miss Winston, un-

willing to neglect an opportunity of setting right her pupil. "Lady Shoreham was left sole guardian to her children."

"Lord Shoreham was probably of opinion that she would be a better judge of the education to be bestowed on a person of his son's rank in life, than my father or Mr. Holloway, who do not live in what is called the great world."

"Luckily for them!"—responded Miss W. with sententious solemnity.

"Her views would certainly never have coincided with theirs; for from the period of Lord Shoreham's death till lately, she has not spent a single week at Wynnex Abbey!"

"Lady Shoreham is fond of London and the continent," said Miss Winston, "and knew the management of the estate to be in good hands."

"The executorship has given my father a great deal of trouble; but still I think he likes it," observed Margaret. "Since Lady Shoreham has been in the county, new furnishing

and making gardens and conservatories at Wynnex, it often strikes me that he feels her to be exceeding her privilege."

"And so I fancy she is. Lady Shoreham has no power except over her jointure and the allowance for the education of her children. Still I can understand that so near the young Viscount's attainment of his majority, your father may not choose to oppose her."

"Why not?—Lord Shoreham has not been at Wynnex since he left school. He was quite a boy when he was here last. He cannot have given orders for all these improvements, and may disapprove what she has been doing."

"You speak, my dear, as if you resented it yourself?"

"I repeat what my father observed as we were returning the other day from Wynnex."

"Have a care Margaret, how you repeat it to any one but me. It is reported at Westerton, that your father has nothing so much at heart as to see you settled at the Abbey."

“ How absurd !” exclaimed Margaret, much amused. “ *I* settled at Wynnex—*I* a great lady—*I* a viscountess !—*I*, who scarcely dare look Lady Shoreham in the face ! Consider, for a moment, how much *I* am beneath them ; and what misery is said to spring from unequal marriages !”

“ I was not advocating the wisdom of such an alliance, but simply telling you what is said in Westerton on the subject.”

“ The people at Westerton seem to trouble themselves very unnecessarily about our affairs. But, good gracious !” cried Margaret, interrupting herself, and glancing at the window, “ here is Lady Shoreham’s pony phaeton, and a party on horseback !”

“ Quick ! ring the bell my dear, and order a fire in the drawing-room !” cried Miss Winston. And in accordance with the governess’s notions of politeness, the visitors were ushered into a room from which a red-armed housemaid escaped, with her tinder-box in her hand

in an opposite direction, while puffs of smoke circled through its damp uninhabited atmosphere, instead of being received in the warm snug, comfortable study, which Miss Winston held to be unpardonably littered by her pupil's books and work-boxes.

“ I learn, with regret, that your father is not at home, my dear Miss Barnsley,” said Lady Shoreham, extending her hand kindly to the blushing Margaret.

“ My father is at Westerton ;—this is the day of the justice meeting,” replied Margaret, receiving with a sense of diffidence, almost amounting to pain, the greeting of Miss Drewe and her sister ; and the profound, but supercilious bow of a young gentleman by whom they were accompanied, and whom in her panic she took to be Lord Shoreham.

“ True, I ought to have remembered it. My residence abroad has rendered me shamefully forgetful of good old Kentish customs. On the present occasion, I am a sufferer

by my ignorance; I wished to ask Mr. Barnsley's sanction to running away with you for the week of our entertainments at Wynnex. I grieve that I am unable to offer beds to the whole party; but it will be easy for Mr. Barnsley and your friend Miss Winsley to join you at the Abbey on the 22nd."

"You are extremely kind; I will speak to papa," said Margaret, to whom these civilities were as agreeable as a committal to Westerton gaol.

"I am sure, my dear, your papa will feel honoured in accepting her ladyship's invitation for you," interposed Miss Winston, desirous not to appear affronted.

"In that case, I will beg you to inform Mr. Barnsley," continued Lady Shoreham, addressing the governess, "that I will drive over to fetch Miss Barnsley on Saturday next—and that, as the London solicitors will be at Wynnex on the twenty-first, for a general discharge of the

minority accounts, I shall hope for the pleasure of his company at dinner on that day."

Margaret replied by a silent but smiling bow ; pre-occupied by her misgivings as to whether time had been allowed for the servants to place in the dining-room the luncheon ordered by Miss Winston.

An awkward pause ensued, in consequence of her cogitations, which brought under general attention the conversation between Lucilla Drewe and her brother, to whom she was pointing out the view from the drawing-room windows.

" Yes, great capabilities ! " was the reply of the young lord ; " if the place were mine, I should cut down the hanger yonder, which obstructs a fine sweep of landscape towards Hawkhurst ; and take down a portion of the village to the west, which seems placed there purposely to shut out the river."

" But Stokes Hill Church ? "

“Move it!—there is a much better situation for a church just above the market place.”

“Move it, is easily said by a person of your enterprising spirit. But that fine old gothic tower!”

“The truth is,” resumed the young gentleman, replying to himself rather than to his interlocutor, “this old place of the Woodgates has just the character of all English seats built in that unsocial spirit of aristocraticism, which plants out and walls out the vulgar, at the risk of choke damp and loss of prospect. Your true great British privacy consists in a park fenced round with woods and plantations that resemble the jungles of Sierra Leone!—But then, the grand object is attained!—Stage-coach passengers on the high road cannot discern so much as the chimney tops!”

“We are, I admit, apt to be over-planted,” observed Lady Shoreham; “yet unluckily, the landscape gardeners who sixty years ago undertook to replace by pert planta-

tions the decaying oaks of our great grandfathers, made war upon the finest features of our parks, their noble avenues. In the time of Lord Shoreham's father, there were four splendid avenues at Wynnex leading to the four lodges,—called the spring, the summer, the autumn and the winter walks, that is,—avenues of lime, chesnut, beech and oak; but they were swept away by Repton."

"I should think they must have given rather a formal appearance to the park?"—observed Margaret in a half hesitating tone.

"Just the look of the turnpike roads in France, where one finds avenues intersecting each other in all directions," sneered the young gentleman. "The landscape gardeners of England act on a radically erroneous system. They say of a gentleman's park, as people who know nothing of the drama, say of the stage—'Consult nature; above all things, consult nature; the nearer you approach nature, the greater your perfection!'—a capital error—a funda-

mental blunder!—The stage is not nature—*cannot* be nature!—At the utmost, you can but render it the highest order of art. Just so with parks and gardens. They form at best a puerile imitation of natural landscape; the point is to create a new order of things by the foreign aid of ornament, through a concentration of curious trees, shrubs, flowers, rocks and waters,—such as nature cannot afford to lavish on a single spot. Look at Versailles, Isola-Bella, or the villas of Rome, and compare their gardens with the pin-cushion lawns, serpentine walks, and a duck pond with weeping willows, which disgrace our national taste on the continent under the name of English gardens.”

“Shocking, indeed!” echoed Lucilla. “What Chinese bridges and Russian Kiosks one is required to admire at Chantilly, the little Trianon, and hundreds of German palaces under the name of ‘Jardins Anglais.’”

“The style is totally inapplicable to palaces.

There is something much more imposing in the grand designs of *Le Nôtre*," observed Lady Shoreham.

And Margaret profited by the ensuing pause to invite the party to luncheon. But it appeared they were to lunch with the Sullivans, the young people having promised to ride round by Hawkhurst. At the name of Sullivan, poor Margaret Barnsley's confusion increased so much, that she could not fully understand Lady Shoreham's remark, as she rose to take leave.

"My son will not be with us before the 16th or 17th. Shoreham is shooting with his friend Lord Buckhurst, at the Duke of Grantville's, in Norfolk; but pray tell Mr. Barnsley that he will certainly be at Wynnex by the beginning of the week after next."

"And who, then, was that tall, prosy, contemptuous young man?" inquired Margaret of Miss Winston, after listening patiently to a rebuke full ten minutes long upon her disre-

spectful familiarity with the Viscountess, and general disregard of etiquette ; “ I took him at the time, for Lord Shoreham.”

“ Because, my dear, your heedlessness prevents you from hearing or seeing half that is passing around you.”

“ Not my heedlessness, — my *shyness*. I have lived so little in company — I cannot accustom myself at once to so many strangers.”

“ It needed no great exercise of courage to listen when Lady Shoreham named that gentleman to you, when you entered the room, as Mr. Sullivan Brereton.”

“ Brereton ? — Edward’s brother ? — Good gracious, how unlike ! — I never should have guessed it !” cried Margaret.

“ Mr. Brereton has had greater advantages ; has been abroad, has mixed more in the world.”

“ Advantages ? — yet so inferior to his brother !”

“ He appears well-informed, and entertains more decided opinions.”

“ But how different from the diffident, kind, courteous, manners of Edward Sullivan !”

“ I am sorry, my dear Margaret, after Mr. Barnsley’s unqualified rejection of that young man, to see you thus avowedly prejudiced in his favour,” said Miss Winston.

“ Indeed I am not prejudiced. I was speaking rather to the discredit of Mr. Brereton, than to the credit of Edward.”

“ My dear, I have told you before, that it is highly indecorous on the part of a young lady of your age to call a young man by his christian name. Let me never again hear you talk of ‘ Edward.’ ”

“ It is so difficult to get over habits contracted from childhood !— I should as soon think of calling Helen ‘ Miss Sullivan.’ ”

“ I suspect you will soon find it advisable !” observed Miss Winston, leading the way back

into their warm sociable room. “ Unless I am much mistaken, the affair of yesterday will create a total estrangement between the two families.”

CHAPTER V.

Much bruit, little fruit.

PROVERB QUOTED BY LORD BACON.

LADY Shoreham was a woman unexceptionable in conduct, character, and manners, as regards the superficial moralities of life. She had been a respectful daughter to reckless parents; a deferential wife to a husband who valued her less than the least valuable drawer of his cabinet of medals; and was now a devoted mother to the three children he had bequeathed to her guardianship.

But, as there exist certain infatuations

known by the names of egotism, favouritism, nepotism, Lady Shoreham was the slave of an *engouement* which, for want of a better name, must be termed familyism.

Till the period of her marriage, her brothers and sisters represented in her eyes a privileged race, to whom the interests of the whole world were to be sacrificed ; but, from the moment of becoming a mother, this idolatry was transferred to her children. She held their finger-aches to exceed in importance the plagues and pestilences depopulating a province ; and a whole navy might sink unheeded, so that the pleasure-boat of the young Viscount floated in smooth water. The weakness was as little unamiable as any weakness can be, that implies indifference towards the sufferings of mankind ; for she gave up her time and thoughts to the advantage of her offspring, and would have considered her own misery and that of the whole human race, as unworthy to

be weighed against a flood of tears from the eyes of any member of her beloved family !

Yet, on points unconnected with this besetting weakness, Lady Shoreham was a woman of tolerable judgment. Where those three idolized beings did not intervene, she could see with a penetrating eye, and even feel with a kindly heart ; though where Lord Shoreham and his sisters were concerned, she became the puppet of her ramifying selfishness.

This foolish partiality produced a two-fold evil ; by rendering a pleasant woman at times a very disagreeable companion, and by misleading the young people as to their own consequence. The boy Viscount had made his appearance at Eton, puffed up with maternal inflation ; and the six months' buffeting and mockery, by which the mistake had been cudgelled out of him, was a sufficiently severe school ; but the two girls, who knew nothing

of the world, either through the microcosm of a public school or the magnifying glass of society, had still their lesson to learn.

This habit of considering every thing and every body with reference to the family of Shoreham, inclined the widowed Viscountess strongly in favour of Barnsley and his daughter. Too well born and too well bred to be a searcher out of other people's pedigrees—unless when involving a connection with herself, the vague announcement made by Lord Shoreham, on their first visit to Wynnex Abbey after Barnsley's instalment at Stokeshill, that "their new neighbour was an intelligent young man, bred to the law but too independent to pursue it as a profession," comprised all she wished to know on the subject. In the course of a few months, Barnsley acquired some interest in her eyes by the loss of his pretty, timid, unoffending wife; and though the ladies of Westerton and its vicinity were disappointed at the readiness with which the widower sur-

mounted his affliction, and the contrast afforded by his bright countenance and fussy activity to the despondencies becoming his interesting position, the Viscountess was content to be secured from the *gêne* of a mourning visiter, more especially as Lord Shoreham, a man of science and letters, found his account in the professional experience of Stokeshill. Barnsley proved a proficient in the only branch of knowledge in which his lordship was an ignoramus; and when it appeared that the new comer was quite as eager to assist in the despatch of the Viscount's business, as the Viscount to let it remain undespached, a league of amity, grounded on reciprocity of service, was speedily established between them. The friendship of Lord Shoreham afforded to Mr. Barnsley a footing in the county; while the zeal of Mr. Barnsley, in the management of Lord Shoreham's affairs, afforded leisure to the erudite peer to inflict upon the Antiquarian Society, a treatise on the Round Towers of

Ireland, besides three long-winded inaugural chapters of a projected history of the county of Kent.

But within ten years of the formation of this auspicious alliance, the worthy Viscount was done to death by the discovery of a tessellated pavement at a remote part of the park at Wynex Abbey. Between the excitement caused by surmises as to its origin as a Roman villa, bath, or bake-house, and the cold caught in groping, day after day, in a rainy month of November into the excavations, his lordship drew his last breath—a martyr to antiquarianism and a pleurisy; and Lady Shoreham's first moment of satisfaction, after so startling an event, occurred when, on the opening of the Viscount's will, it came to light that he had appointed as executors, his neighbours Barnsley and Holloway, instead of his two brothers, Alfred and Augustus Drewe, who were the objects of her especial aversion. She knew Mr. Barnsley to be a friendly, prudent man, likely

to do justice to the interests of her children ; and, as Mr. Holloway with a world of business of his own, had at once delegated to his colleague the active executorship, she trusted she could meet with little opposition to her plans and projects.

Any other executor, she was certain, would urge upon her the propriety of passing a considerable portion of her time at Wynnex. Now she happened to detest Wynnex ;—the place was dull, damp, and destitute of the sort of neighbourhood indispensable to her notions of society. The damp had killed her husband and disagreed with her children ; and the dullness, and want of neighbourhood would be fatal to herself. Against the Abbey, therefore, she set her face, even while enveloped in all the solemnity of her widow's cap : and her conviction that the zealous executor would be content to concentrate in his own person, the representation of the family and officiate as a sort of vice-comes at Wynnex

Abbey, satisfied her that she should meet with no obstacle from Barnsley.

Time confirmed her expectations. While Lady Shoreham was consulting the whims and fancies of her offspring, by excursions to foreign countries, or English watering places, Barnsley reigned supreme at Wynnex. He had the ordering of the whole estate, the shooting of all the game, the disposing of all the patronage; and, to do him justice, had never in the smallest degree abused his trust. Barnsley was a man of strict integrity. He dealt with the property of the Shoreham family as if it had been his own—in the figurative, and not in the literal sense of the term; and though murmurs and complaints occasionally reached the ear of the noble widow, which the murmurers and complainers knew not she was without legal power to redress, it invariably proved that the exactions and oppressions complained of had been imposed in the interest of the young Viscount, never in that of his repre-

sentative. The head keeper and head gardener hinted that Barnsley was no gentleman—that he had sold off the deer, and would not suffer the succession houses to be kept up during the young Lord's minority, and her Ladyship's absence from England; but they could not say that so much as a partridge or a pumpkin ever found its way from Wynnex to Stokeshill Place. When occasionally Margaret rode over with her father, and amused herself during his interview with the steward in the gardens or green-houses, it was noticed that, though the rarest exotics might be blooming there unheeded, and Margaret was known to be a devoted floriculturist, not so much as a blossom had she ever made her own.

This disinterestedness, which Lady Shoreham knew how to appreciate, rendered Barnsley an object of only greater dislike to the menials who would have been glad to find, in the executor's encroachments, a plea for their peculations;—nay, even the Holloways, whose

estates adjoined those of the minor, were of opinion that Barnsley showed himself too indifferent to the preservation of the game on the estate. What was the expense of two or three keepers more or less, in the general accounts?—And though Barnsley, in according leave to shoot to the more respectable neighbours, gave it under certain restrictions, on the ground that he wished the preserves to remain in such a condition that three years' strict preserving, previously to Lord Shoreham's coming of age, might give him the best shooting in the county,—many were rebellious, and all ungrateful.

But the manifest probity of the trustee was not without its reward. That which he loved best in the world—unprofitable business,—poured in upon him from every quarter. He was solicited to become trustee to all the world!—Public charities—private settlements—minors, widows—bankrupts, all were desirous to secure so excellent an operative, and so safe a deposi-

tory ;—and Barnsley, without a moment he could call his own, became the happiest of mankind !

That the claims of his own daughter and estate should be neglected under such exigencies, is not surprising. Nay, to so vigorous an extent did he carry his sense of duty as a man of business, that when eligible opportunities of investment presented themselves, he profited by them for his wards before he thought of himself.

On one occasion, certain lands had fallen into the market in consequence of the bankruptcy of a certain tradesman at Westerton, which Barnsley immediately proposed as a purchase to his co-trustees under the marriage settlement of old Holloway's eldest daughter, whose estate adjoined the property ; though he had private intimation of a line of canal projected through the property, which would fifty-fold increase its value. If he possessed the bustling, tenacious, pragmatical spirit of attorney-

ship, he was free from the pettifogging rapacity included in the assessed catalogue of sins, supposed to form an appendix to the Rolls.

Barnsley might, perhaps, have experienced some regret that the period of his grander stewardship was nearly expired, had he not felt certain that a young man so fond of London and Paris as Lord Shoreham, would not cease to be dependent on his aid after attaining his majority. Nothing could be more evident, than that he inherited his lady mother's detestation of Wynnex Abbey; for immediately after leaving Oxford, he had set off for Naples, and since his return, had never set foot on the estate. Barnsley was unacquainted with him, except as the formal boy of fifteen, who, accompanied by his German tutor, had twice spent a few days of his holidays at the Abbey. But even should Lord Shoreham take it into his head to reside there, his inexperience must naturally turn to his judicious neigh-

bour for counsel and support; and Barnsley felt that it would be only having the noble proprietor of Wynnex in leading strings, instead of the three hundred tenants, labourers, and domestics, hitherto submitted to his government.

This vision of power had however been in some degree dissipated, by Lady Shoreham's arrival at Wynnex with her two daughters, at the close of the London season; and her assumption of authority in ordering repairs, furniture and improvements, to be defrayed by her son on his approaching accession to independence. Barnsley was startled, and displeased; but he felt that interference would be alike useless and productive of coolness between the families. Though too firmly established in county consideration by his habits of usefulness and conscientious integrity, to need the support of a young man of Lord Shoreham's age, it was essential to his comfort and respectability, that no breach should separate

him from those with whom he had been so publicly connected; more especially as it certainly *had* glanced into his mind, that a marriage between the Viscount and his pretty pleasing Margaret, was by no means an improbable event.

It was not his wish to accomplish such a connection by any unhandsome manœuvres; he had no leisure for plots; he was too busy with other people's business, to have conspired on his own account, for a kingly crown! But in the common course of things, without interfering with his justice business, his trusteeships, or his progress into parliament. Margaret's soft grey eyes might reach the accessible heart of a Viscount of one-and-twenty. At so early an age, Lord Shoreham would of course be considerably under his mother's control; and Lady Shoreham's friendly familiarity left no room to doubt that she would give her utmost sanction to a match, by which the Stokeshill estates might be eventually incorpo-

uncles, the Honourable Augustus, and the Honourable Alfred Drewe—so pointedly excluded by the late Lord from any share in the administration of his affairs—might not, at some future time, obtain an influence over the uncorrupted mind of their nephew.

“ Very kind—very considerate of Lady Shoreham,” observed Barnsley, on learning on his return home to a late dinner, the invitation given by the Viscountess to his daughter. “ You accepted, my dear, of course ? ”

“ Miss Barnsley waited, Sir, for your authorization. I promised her Ladyship to mention the subject to you,” observed Miss Winston.

“ A very unnecessary formality ! ” replied Barnsley, who had about as much regard for the feelings of his daughter’s governess as for those of his elbow chair. “ For the future, Margaret, whatever invitations are given you by Lady Shoreham are to be accepted unconditionally. Lady Shoreham is a person of too

high a position in society to suggest anything unbecoming. Be ready to wait upon her Ladyship when she calls for you on Saturday ; which arrangement," he continued, turning carelessly to Miss Winston, " will save you all trouble about this fête at Wynnex."

Margaret trembled with consternation at the idea of confronting, without her governess's protection and promptership, so terrible a tribunal ; while the governess struggled with unshed tears to think how little regard twelve years' unremitting devotion had earned for her from her pupil's father. Custom, however, rendered her callous to the rubs of life ; she had been so long occupied in inspiring Margaret with the conviction that her father's decrees were immutable, as at last to have become persuaded of it herself.

" Mr. Sullivan Brereton, Sir, accompanied Lady Shoreham and her family this morning," said she, by way of diverting Barnsley's and Margaret's notice from her momentary emotion.

“ Mr. Sullivan Brereton?—I hope, Margaret, you were particularly civil to him?”

“ I did not sit near him, papa. Indeed, I was not aware that you wished me to show much attention to any of the Sullivans?”

“ Just now, my dear—after a step they may resent as an offence. I have no wish to quarrel with Sullivan or his family, because I do not give my daughter to his younger son.”

“ I am sure, papa, you would never have given her to his elder!” said Margaret, cheered by this unexpected announcement.—“ A most disagreeable person, Mr. Brereton!”

“ He inherits the fine Irish property of Mrs Sullivan’s brother, Lord Brereton,” observed Barnsley, who estimated a man’s merits as others would his income tax. “ Young Brereton has between eight and ten thousand a year;—very different circumstances from Edward’s modest position! From something that fell from Lady Shoreham the other day, I should

not be surprised if he were to marry Miss Lucilla Drewe."

"Lord Brereton's property does not lie in Kent, I fancy?" demanded Margaret.

"No, in Ireland, in the county of Cork. A charming estate!—all the advantages of lying near a sea-port town, and the land worth a hundred and ten pounds an acre!"—cried Barnsley, gratified to hear his daughter express for the first time an interest in the nature of property.

"I was not thinking of *that*," replied Margaret, unsuspectingly; "I was only hoping, that if he married Miss Drewe, there would be no occasion for them to settle in this neighbourhood. He seems so very self-sufficient and disagreeable!"

CHAPTER VI.

Human beings raise themselves above human nature upon two wings :—simplicity and purity.—Simplicity of mind, and purity of heart.

IMITATION OF J. C.

SATURDAY the 15th arrived, and with it Lady Shoreham in her pony phaeton ; and poor Margaret found that, in spite of her secret hopes for some interdicting catastrophe, some cold or sore throat, her visit to Wynnex Abbey was ordained. She had refrained from expressing to their full extent, in Miss Winston's presence, her apprehensions and misgivings ; having perceived from the first, that neither her father nor Lady Shoreham were desirous her

governess should bear her company. She felt it her duty to imitate the forbearance with which that humble woman acquiesced in their decree.

“ For the dressing-box I fancy I can find room,” observed Lady Shoreham, when she found Miss Barnsley followed to the hall door by two servants bearing a dressing box and trunk; “ but I fear, my dear, I must trouble you to send over the rest of your belongings with your maid.”

And Miss Winston, who had expected that the solemn ceremony of “ fetching ” was to be performed in the family coach, luckily overheard the injunction in time to order out the Stokeshill carriage, and take care that Gladstone, her pupil’s attendant, should be in readiness at Wynnex to receive her. Though mortified at heart, she was eager that Margaret should do honour to her instructions on this her first introduction to the county; and next to the excitement of proceeding herself to the

Abbey, enjoyed that of preparing Miss Barnsley for so great an occasion.

“ You will find us quite alone,” observed Lady Shoreham, when Margaret, her cheeks flushed by agitation, was seated by her side in the phaeton. “ My son and his young friends will not be with us till Wednesday. My brother, Lord Tynemouth, and his family reach us the day after ; and the Holloways and Sullivans come on the 21st. We have no one but Mr. Brereton and my nephew Sir Ross Carmichael, who are riding this morning with Mademoiselle Mennequin and the girls, to look at the ruins of Roding Castle.”

But the two strangers thus constituting “ nobody” were quite enough to overawe the inexperienced Margaret Barnsley ; she felt that her pains and penalties were beginning. Accustomed for so many years to visit the Abbey almost as its mistress, she could scarcely understand the change which caused her heart to beat so painfully as they drove up to the

door ; where, instead of the slipshod housemaid or superannuated porter by whom twelve months before, a ring at the hall had been answered, two servants in livery and two out, hurried forth to receive their lady.

“ You will, I trust, my dear Miss Barnsley, make yourself quite at home,” said Lady Shoreham, after having claimed her approval for the new conservatory and newly-furnished library, saloon, and morning room. “ Lucilla and Mary will be here immediately to do the honours of the young ladies’ book-room to you, and show you your own ; till when, as I have letters to finish for the post, I must leave you. By the way, a box of new books came down from town, last night ;—here they are, in the rack.”

And rolling her furred phaeton-cloak around her, Lady Shoreham glided out of the library ; leaving Margaret alone in a world almost as new to her, as if she had dropped from a balloon into the territory of the king of Ava.

The apartment in which she was now installed, in a luxurious lounging chair, with a collection of the last new poems, novels, and periodicals by her side, had been completely metamorphosed since Margaret was accustomed to take refuge there from a passing shower. Stokeshill was handsomely and conveniently furnished; but with no such excess as to prepare her for the whimsical and voluptuous magnificence recently displayed at the Abbey. Every new-fangled invention of the virtù-mongers of Paris and London, was there to be found.

The late Lord Shoreham's collections, long carefully encased, were displayed to advantage in glazed cabinets of carved ebony, fitted into the retiring windows of the library; while new writing-tables and writing-chairs — reading-tables and reading-chairs—desks, divans, ottomans, and the luxuries of a literary ease that resembles literary study much as an Arabian does a dray-horse, served to fill up the

capacious chamber. Corinthian bronzes, Etruscan vases, and Egyptian reliques, were crowded together in what appeared to Margaret most unclassical confusion ; and after gazing on them till her eyes were weary, and finding, from the lugubrious telling of a gothic bronze clock representing the cathedral at Rheims, that it was only four o'clock, she took an unbound book from the rack, and throwing herself back in her chair, opened the only volume of the collection to which Miss Winston's prohibitions did not seem to extend. Novels, romances, or modern poetry, were sealed fountains ; but there seemed no possible objection to Blackwood's Magazine,—of which, the first article was headed " Prison Discipline," and the second " Parliamentary Reform."

It was in vain, however, that Margaret's patience strove to attach itself to a trite political pamphlet. Listlessly turning over the leaves, she commenced an article, which the name of a female writer announced as unexcep-

tionable. Her attention was soon attracted,—soon engrossed; for the story was one of innocent and unhappy love, of which the pathos and interest were irresistible. Margaret's colour went and came as she read on. Her heart beat tumultuously; the tears started to her eyes:—her whole nature was under the influence of a spell of exquisite enchantment. Her strong natural sensibility was, for the first time, initiated into the mazes of fictitious woe; by the description of a mother hanging over the death-bed of an only daughter—a being young and beautiful, who, like the maid of Desdemona's mother, had loved, and been forsaken.

Overpowered by emotion, Margaret paused and gasped for breath. She had not dreamed that there were such afflictions in the world. She had hitherto heard neither the voice of passion nor the voice of mockery. The tale which, like the “dying fall” of Count Orsino's music, came to this mournful and tender close

seemed to have opened a new frame of the universe to her contemplation; and the tears came streaming down her cheeks, till her silken ringlets lay uncurled by their moisture. The instincts of her soul were awakened, like the conscience of the murderous Thane, to “sleep no more!”

From the reverie thus excited, she was disturbed by the sound of approaching footsteps; and as she looked up from the book that lay half closed upon her knee, it must be owned the moment would have been propitious for Edward Sullivan to have presented himself before her. But unluckily, the intruder who stood staring with amazement at her swollen eyes, presented the very antipodes of that which ladies love to look on. Tall, awkward, the sinister expression of a naturally disagreeable countenance rendered still more forbidding by the rough masses of his dark hair, Margaret had scarcely time to wonder who he was or whence he came; for, after an exclamation of “I beg your pardon—

I understood Lady Shoreham was here," the stranger hurried out of the library.

With the same erroneous precipitation that Miss Barnsley had decided Brereton to be Lord Shoreham, she now settled the intruder to be Lord Shoreham's cousin, Sir Ross Carmichael. But she thought no further of him. The spell in which she sat entranced had been suspended, but not broken. Margaret was still sorrowing over the fate of the gentle victim, who had followed up the gift of her affections with the sacrifice of her life; for her unsullied mind had not been steeled by running the gauntlet of a circulating library, to that unfeminine mood of philosophy which enables the fine lady to idle over the "Bride of Lammermoor" while her hair is dressing for a ball; then rush, without a tear, into the vortex of fashion and frivolity!—It was a terrible trial to her when at last, the sound of cheerful voices in the hall compelled her to lay aside the breviary of her new religion, and rise from her

seat to welcome and be welcomed by Lady Shoreham's daughters, returning in high spirits from their morning's ride.

The Drewes were tall, handsome, high-bred girls, with no worse disqualification than the selfishness into which their excellent disposition had been cramped by the fond indulgence of their mother. All without was bright and polished,—all within hollow and unprofitable. But the magnitude of their faults secured them from lesser failings. Their self-sufficiency rendered them superior to the paltry jealousy of Margaret Barnsley's attractions. Rivalship with such a person was out of the question; and instead of treating her want of connection with the scorn it would have provoked from some country baronet's daughter, they were fascinated by her unassuming gentleness, and amused by her *naïveté*.

This favourable judgment was fully confirmed in the course of the three first days passed by Margaret at the Abbey. Inexperienced in the

magic of operas and concerts, she was enchanted by the perfection of their musical accomplishments ; and after being introduced to their easels and embroidery frames, their Spanish, German and Italian libraries, the poor girl shrank from the contemplation of her comparative incapacity. She allowed nothing for difference of tuition. She only felt that she was a dunce.

In this contempt of herself, it must be owned that Margaret was admirably seconded by the two gentlemen making up their party at Wynnex.

Sir Ross Carmichael, a raw young Irish baronet, the son of one of the late Lord Shoreham's sisters, having understood that the quiet spoken young lady in the white muslin dress was nothing more than the daughter of the family man of business, looked down upon her from the highest pinnacle of his Milesian arrogance ; while Brereton, despising the whole world as compared with himself, despised Miss

Barnsley of Stokeshill, as compared with the whole world. The poor girl was, however, too well convinced of her own insignificance to fancy herself ill-used; and when (Lady Shoreham having retired to her especial corner of the library to pass the evening writing letters,) Mademoiselle Mennequin, the French governess, posted herself beside the young visiter to honour her with the inquiries usually made by governesses of young ladies—"Do you play—do you sing—do you draw—are you fond of history—how many hours a day do you devote to your music?" and ended by inviting her to a game of chess, Margaret thought herself distinguished by especial kindness. She knew not that in such houses as Wynnex, it is part of the ignominious vocation of the governess to entertain such of the visitors as are thought too stupid for the rest.

Among the things that puzzled her most in the course of her first week at the Abbey, was her own previous insensibility to the importance

of Lord Shoreham. It had never entered her head to conjecture whether he were tall or short, amiable or unamiable ; but now, the consequence she saw assigned to his most trifling inclinations by his mother and sisters, convinced her that he must be a highly interesting personage. Every thing, and every body, at Wynnex was referred to his oracular judgment.

“ I am not fond of yellow, though it is certainly the best candle-light colour,” observed Lady Shoreham ; “ but I chose yellow hangings for the saloon, because Shoreham thinks it becoming.”

“ Do not let any more figs be served,” said she, another day, to the *maitre-d'hôtel*, when the dessert was put on the table, “ Lord Shoreham is particularly fond of ripe figs ; and I fear there will not be enough to last out the season.”

The servants were, of course, still more servile. Twenty times a day, Margaret over-

heard one or other of them expressing his terrors to his lady, lest the workmen should not have finished their operations before my lord came down; that the new cooks would not have arrived before my lord came down; that certain missing cases of still Sillery champagne would not make their appearance before my lord came down; that the off-wheeler of her ladyship's set of greys would not get over its lameness before my lord came down. "My lord" was the object of their hourly and half-hourly solicitude!

Margaret could not help feeling that so much cost and care, bestowed on a lad of one-and-twenty, was a work of supererogation. She had witnessed, at Hawkhurst, the indifference experienced by Edward Sullivan who was two years older; and the young Viscount could not be more deserving attention than poor Edward. His sisters, indeed, often adverted to his attractions, and cited his *bon-mots*; and even Mademoiselle Mennequin was always re-

marking “ *C'est un jeune homme si distingué que Monsieur le Vicomte !* ” till Miss Barnsley began to regret that the Phoenix would not arrive till a large proportion of his birth-day guests were assembled. But his mother and sisters, instead of venturing to regret that he should come so late, seemed to marvel at his good-nature in condescending to come at all. Meanwhile, Lady Shoreham's brother Lord Tynemouth, with his two pretty, laughing, good-humoured daughters, Flora and Jessie Devereux, were already installed at the Abbey ; and it gratified Margaret to find that the arrival of their pleasant chatty cousins made no difference in the attentions she experienced from the ladies of the house.

If the truth must be told, poor Margaret's presence was more courted at the Abbey, than her absence noted at Stokeshill Place. Miss Winston, enjoying the first holiday vouchsafed her for the last twelve years, profited by the opportunity to fulfil dinner engagements of

nearly the same standing, with her worthy friend Mrs. Squills, the consort of the family apothecary, and her civil friend Mrs. Dobbs, the lady of the Westerton attorney.

So deeply engaged, too, was Mr. Barnsley at that critical period, in winding up his executorship accounts with "William, Viscount Shoreham, a minor," that, except at the moment of pouring out his own tea, he scarcely missed either daughter or governess. It was his custom to pass his evenings writing in his library; and it seemed unimportant whether, during this peremptory occupation, his only child stitched away her uneventful hours in the adjoining chamber, or were thrust into the press of the gay world at Wynnex Abbey. He had such a multiplicity of accounts to cast up; such calculations to make of interest and compound interest; such verifications of stock receipts, such examinations of bankers' books; that, with as many daughters as king Priam, he

would have been unable to bestow more than half a thought upon the family.

All the leisure he could give to reflection, indeed, was engrossed by the unpleasant aspect of his connection with Hawkhurst Hill. At the Quarter Sessions, he had extended his hand in mechanical salutation to old Sullivan, and received a chilling bow in return. The rebuff had been inflicted in presence of a quarter of the county. The Sullivans chose to make their resentment as public as possible; the Sullivans, his fast friends and excellent neighbours from the day of his instalment at Stokeshill; the Sullivans, who though near relatives of the Woodgate family, had taken pleasure in doing honour to their superseders.

Barnsley was not only stung to the quick by the offence, but deeply mortified by the apprehension that the suspense in which he had so patiently waited a vacancy in the represen-

tation of Westerton, might have been borne in vain. Old Sullivan had long been the confidant of his projects ; he might perhaps take malicious pleasure in starting his eldest son as a candidate.

Barnsley almost determined to sound the young man's views upon the subject. He knew that Brereton was staying at Wynnex ; and it was easy to ride over on pretext of seeing his daughter, before the Hawkhurst family joined the general assemblage.

“ Who on earth is this quiz, coming across the lawn with Lady Shoreham ? ” demanded Flora Devereux of her cousins, as she stood at the window of the young ladies' room, in which they were all idly busy at their different tables. “ Leathers and top boots ; with just such a striped blue and buff waistcoat as grand-papa has on in Opie's picture ! ”

“ I dare say it is the steward. They have been settling about the marquees for the tenantry.”

“The steward?—oh! no, my dear. The smirk with which the creature is addressing my aunt, is far too familiar. What a shrewd countenance;—but what a mean, narrow forehead; now he takes off his hat to Mr. Brereton!—I will lay my life it is——”

She paused, startled by the sudden movement of Miss Barnsley in rising and quitting the room.

“Is she ill?—her face was crimson,” continued Flora, when the door closed upon Margaret. “What could be the matter with her?”

“My dearest Flo, what have you done!” cried Mary Drewe, having joined her cousin at the window. “The man is her father;—a good sort of person enough, whom mamma prodigiously patronizes;—very useful, I fancy, hereabouts, in the way of magistrate and country gentleman.”

“How I do hate a country gentleman!” exclaimed Jessie Devereux, without even advert-

ing to the indiscretion committed by her sister.

“ Mr. Brereton calls them the aristocracy of the rural population,” said Lucilla, returning to her easel.

“ Don’t be angry with me, Lu,” cried her cousin, as giddy as before, “ but that Mr. Brereton of your’s is a sad prig! Last night, he began talking some trash or other about the glimpses of perfectibility vouchsafed amid the storms and contentions of the age. You must cure him of this prosiness, my dear, if you condescend to bestow your noble presence on his castle in the bogs. Just think what Shoreham would do with a brother-in-law, who sermonized about ‘ glimpses of perfectibility!’ ”

“ My brother is very fond of Mr. Brereton, who was his friend at Oxford,” said Lucilla, somewhat piqued.

“ Yes—at Oxford, a prosy friend may be an advantage. No doubt, poor Brereton helped to cram my cousin for his examinations. But

in the world, in *our* world,—a man who affects that sort of jargon, gets voted a bore, and remains catacombed, season after season, in parliamentary dinner parties and dowager conversaziones.”

“ Yes, I am fully aware of the frivolity of London society,” said Lucilla, growing angry for her admirer, and insensibly falling into his phrases. “ And what is the consequence?—that women have ceased to exercise any sort of influence. Read Henry Bulwer’s book; he says that in Paris, where they raise themselves to the level of their husbands or lovers, they are consulted as oracles; they are paramount,—they are omnipotent. Not a diplomatist, not a minister, not a literary man, but is under petticoat control of some kind or other.”

“ And so they are here, and in every country under the sun !” cried Flora Devereux.

“ Here, the prerogative is not worth exercising. Here it is quite a different thing from the intellectual influence obtained in — ”

“ Mary, Mary !” interrupted Miss Devereux, pretending to stop her ears ; “ for heaven’s sake, lift up your voice from behind that great frame of your’s, and prevent your sister from talking so like a village schoolmaster.”

“ Isn’t she growing horridly pedantic !” replied the younger sister. “ But I do not trouble myself to reform her. I know that Shoreham will pronounce the final amen to Mr. Brereton’s dissertations the moment he arrives ; and Lucilla, you know, is only Brereton’s echo.”

“ What a harmonious couple they will make !” cried the incorrigible Flora——

Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo’s flute.

“ By the way, my dear Lucilla,” cried Jessie, “ all your new papas and mammas, the Sullivan family, are coming here to-day ; what are they like ?”

“ Mr. Sullivan is a proud, stiff, disagreeable old gentleman, full of his Saxon descent and contempt for the modern peerage,” said Mary Drewe, answering for her sister; “ while his wife, who was sister to the late Lord Brereton, is such a mild, docile creature, that she seems to acquiesce in even the absurd arrogance which condemns herself. Then, there is a daughter, Helen Sullivan, a fine open-hearted girl, with a touch of her father’s pride and her mother’s Irish sensibility.”

“ Any sons, beside your Mr. Gradus?”

“ Yes ;—two at school and college, and one in society ; good-natured and inoffensive, as becomes a younger son. Edward Sullivan is an invaluable acquaintance to dance with, when one wants to avoid some disagreeable partner ; and to ride with, when one wants to secure the company of some third person who is not to be undertaken alone. Don’t you think, my dear Miss Barnsley,” continued Mary Drewe, addressing Margaret, “ that Edward Sullivan

(you know him of course?—I mean young Edward Sullivan of Hawkhurst) is an excellent stalking-horse ?—”

Margaret, who, in a brief interview with her father during her absence from the room, had recovered her composure, was now almost as much startled as before. She had neither the most remote idea of the London young lady's meaning, nor courage to inquire.

“ We made wonderful use of him this spring, in town,” continued Mary, who had addressed the question to Margaret, merely to make her feel herself one of the party. “ But he disappeared just at the moment of picnics and gypsy parties, when useful men are most in request. I don't know what became of him. I suppose he came down to Hawkhurst, to repent at leisure ; for I know both Shoreham and his brother were very angry with him about something wrong he had done or wanted to do ; losing his money at Crockford's, or

making love to some opera dancer,—it does not much signify what.”

Margaret felt that it signified materially; for though far from what is called in love with Edward Sullivan, all the friendship which is due to an early playmate, all the interest which a young girl, brought up in uneventful retirement, may be supposed to feel for the only man who had entered her imagination connected with the idea of her future marriage, rendered him an object of interest in her eyes.

“But I suppose, Lu, if you marry Mr. Brereton, you will have nothing to do with any of these people?”—demanded Flora Devereux of her cousin.

“Nothing whatever. Mr. Brereton is perfectly independent, or mamma never would have encouraged the match,” said Lucilla. “In fact, I would not marry the emperor of China, to be bored with his family.”

“ But you will never bear a residence in Ireland, my dear ?”

“ Oh ! yes ;—Mr. Brereton considers it the duty of all Irish proprietors to reside on their estates—and so do I.—I was reading, the other day, Miss Edgeworth’s beautiful story of “ The Absentee.” On that point, my views fully coincide with those of Mr. Brereton. At present, indeed, his place is not in a fit state to receive us. Wyatt is making out plans for a new house at Castle Brereton ; but in five or six years it will be completed ; and then we shall probably make it a point of conscience to go there between the London season and the shooting season. The country about Brereton Castle is out of the question for a sportsman ; but he thinks of hiring a manor in Norfolk, near his uncle the Duke of Grantville’s preserves. As to the winter, I mean at once to interdict Melton, and carry him off to Paris. You know, I have never been used to passing

my winters in the country ;—it would not agree with me. The country is so damp !”

“ Well, well, — all this is charmingly arranged,” cried Flora ; “ and I see you will make one of the most patriotic of Irish residents. But tell me, my dear coz, when is this marriage to take place ?”

“ Oh ! nothing is settled at present. Indeed, mamma has endeavoured to avoid the question of proposals in form, till after Shoreham’s coming of age. Some dilemma on account of money-matters, made her wish to postpone the grand question of fortune and settlements.”

Margaret felt more and more astonished at all she was hearing !—It had served to disarrange her ideas, in the first instance, that when taking leave of her father in the hall, he placed in her hand a roll of ten-pound notes, with an order that she would immediately procure herself a suitable dress for the Wynnex ball ; and an apology that, in the press of busi-

ness, he had forgotten to fulfil his promise before.

But the perplexity arising from the impossibility of complying with his injunction, was nothing compared with the amazement produced by the confidences of Lucilla Drewe to her cousins.

Margaret, accustomed to the abstraction of her father, the reserve of Miss Winston, and the mistrustful miserliness of communication prevalent in second-rate society, was struck dumb by the reckless frankness of her new companions. At first, she was captivated by such openness; but, on reflection, Margaret's delicacy recoiled from the uncalled-for revelation of those secret feelings of the heart, laid bare by these fashionable girls with as little idea of immodesty, as they experienced in the exhibition of their naked shoulders.

"How very foolish they would consider me," thought poor Margaret, bending over

her work, “if they knew, that while they are talking so coolly of their love affairs, I have not even courage to consult them about the means of procuring this unlucky ball-dress !”

CHAPTER VII.

Déjà me tirant par l'oreille
L'ambition hâte mes pas,
Et mon riche habit me conseille
D'apprendre à m'incliner bien bas.
Déjà l'on me fait politesse,
Déjà l'on m'attend au retour ;
Je vais saluer une Altesse,
Et je porte un habit de cour !

BÉRANGER.

MR. HOLLOWAY (or as he was commonly called in the county "Old Holloway," from having been from his youth upwards, a square toes of the squarest description) was a member of that honourable class of country squirehood, which represents in England the unchartered

nobility of other countries. His estates at Withamstead, fully equalled in extent, the *majorats* which in France and Italy confer titular distinctions; and his family, though of no great antiquity, held an honourable footing in the county,—dating its ascension from yeomanship to esquirehood, from the same epoch which beheld the three-cornered hat of William the Dutchman, exchanged for the Crown of Great Britain.

From that period, the house of Holloway had exhibited the usual sequence of prosperity to prudence; its generations were not numerous, but each of them was a wise one!—An estate of six thousand a year, in those times considerable, had increased to more than double the amount by yearly gradation; for instead of diminishing their substance, by alliance with the poorer families of the nobility, they consolidated their fortune by intermarriage with their own opulent class. Thus, the family prospered in all its branches.

For though the first esquire of the name, had shown an example duly followed by his successors, of what is Englishly called, in bad English, “making an eldest son,” this feudal custom did not produce the same evil effects in such a family as the Holloways as in more aristocratical tribes, which cannot dig, and to trade are ashamed. The squires of Withamstead,—(once farm,—next Place,—next Hall)—having no personal dignity to keep up or station to entertain in the Court or Constitution of England, were at liberty to lay by and put out to profit, as many yearly thousands as enabled them to settle their younger sons in comfort and respectability. Instead of obtaining for one a pair of colours in the Guards, for another some small, intellect-stifling, government sinecure,—as must have been the case, had Robert and John Holloway prefixed to their names the unprofitable distinction of “honourable,”—their father purchased for one, a share in a thriving dockyard,

of which he gradually made himself sole proprietor; for another, a partnership in an old-established bank; for a third, a cotton factory; for a fourth, a brewery. Each brother of the present representative of the family was now enjoying his three or four thousand a year, and founding a family of his own, without encroachment on the property of the parent stock. Hardingwood Holloway, who had represented the borough of Westerton in parliament for thirty years, stood not higher in estimation to the west of Temple Bar, than did his wise brethren to the east.

But a cloud was at length impending over the prosperity of the family! George Holloway, its heir apparent, afforded living proof that wise fathers do not always beget wise children; for a thicker headed fellow never did honour to the squirearchy. At college where, as at a military mess, the give-and-take order of pleasantries forms one of the enjoyments of jovial life, Holloway had been occa-

sionally twitted with the mercantile vocation of his uncles ; and unable to furnish the retort courteous expected by his gibbers, found himself at length a mark for contempt instead of a butt for raillery. The young fellow commoners his companions, despised him for being dull,—and he fancied they despised him for not being a lord ! The arrow thus launched had sunk deep into his heart. In after-life, people found him too stupid to quiz ; and the first wound, uneffaced by any deeper scar, went on growing with his growth, and strengthening with his strength ; while every new batch of peers afforded a stimulus to his sufferings. Somewhat deaf and by no means a conversational man, he took no note of the flouts lavished from all sides upon these gentry of the King's creation ; he knew only that it was a mighty hard thing they should be entitled to walk out of a room before himself, and, by attaining a place at table above the salt, secure the best slice of

the haunch, or the liver wing of the fowl, while he was dieted on drumsticks.

For his father possessed an estate of nearly twenty thousand a year, in that county which the brags of Bonaparte and the panic of Pitt rendered, at the beginning of the present century, as important as in that of Cæsar. Young Holloway felt that if Corinth was esteemed by the ancients the key of Greece, Dovor might be called the patent Bramah of England; and when he beheld his father's yeomanry corps galloping on the downs in a paroxysm of the invasion fever, George fancied he could discover in the Birmingham helmet that sat heavy on his heavy brows, a foreboding of that future coronet which was to add another baron to the heroic annals of Kent.

Still, old Holloway would not hear of it! He felt himself too great to be made a baronet, not great enough to be made a peer. The distinction which was to raise him to the

head of a table, would depreciate him to the fag-end of the aristocracy ; and he must stand as low in the upper house, as he stood high in the lower. No ennoblement of public service consecrated in his person a distinction, to which mere opulence affords a prop, but can never afford a basis.

Nevertheless George, who from a dull young man was plodding on into a duller middle-aged, grew heavier in mind and body as he advanced in years ; and this was the only weight he acquired in the world. His inventive faculties were not bright enough to create for himself even a new object of ambition. You might as well expect the Withamstead oaks to bring forth some fine season almonds instead of acorns, as for Holloway, (junior though no longer young,) to fancy the word, great man, could mean anything but a lord.

All those ten years of Lord Shoreham's minority, which did nothing for the young squire but

convert him from a man of thirty into a man of forty, had served to confirm him in this fixed idea. He never enjoyed a day's shooting at Wynnex Abbey, without feeling that the seal of its superiority over Withamstead Hall consisted in a livery-button; he could not bear to hear even the keepers advert to "my late lord's time." He feared that, as plain George Holloway, he might be confounded with his uncle, the brewer,—George Holloway, of Holloway's entire; although the minister's grateful adjuration to his father to "name what he wished done for him," might at any moment distinguish him not only from the relative whom that vulgar fellow Closeman, of Cinnamon Lodge designated as the Bacchus of the *Vat*-ican, but enable him to take precedence of Sir Richard Woodgate with his roll of antediluvian parchments. His one idea had germinated, like a grain of mustard seed, and spread its shade in all directions.

At length, by hearing the point constantly insisted on, old Holloway began to be convinced that, to do justice to his family, he ought to do violence to his prejudices. His younger son Cyril, in the enjoyment of a living of two thousand a-year, fancied his name wanted only the recommendation of Honourable, to acquire the still more flattering qualification of Arch-deacon and Dean; while two superannuated Misses Holloway (whose tart tempers, united with their scraggy ugliness had condemned them to spinsterhood even under circumstances so propitious to matrimony, as being great ladies in a large country neighbourhood,) trusted that the preference, usually conceded to youth and beauty, might for once be accorded to precedence. Aware that Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, the wag of the neighbourhood, distinguished them from the other "maids of Kent," as the old maids of Kent—just as one sees the Old Blue Boar distinguished from the New, — they trusted that a peerage in the

family would make nymphs of them at once. On all sides, they beset their father. Even poor old Mrs. Holloway's eyes twinkled through her spectacles, at the notion of hearing herself addressed as "your ladyship."

What passed on the subject between stupid George and old Holloway, and old Holloway and the quick-witted minister, did not transpire. Perhaps the Bacon of Tory times may have been of opinion that old Holloway of Withamstead was too substantial a man for the commons;—that though the old dog was an exceedingly safe beast while stretched at ease before the fire with the whole hearth-rug at his disposal, he might turn and snarl should his tail be trod on; for the honourable member for Westerton was the very man to resist anything like encroachment on the agricultural interest.

In short, a peerage was accorded with heartier good will than it had been asked; and though to keep up the charter of cabinet treble-dealing,

much was said of the immensity of the claims on government for such concessions, old Holloway went back to Great George Street, as sure of his Barony of Withamstead, as he was of repenting the demand before five years were over his head.

A large and severely canvassed creation having occurred only a short time previous to the arrangement, it seemed unadvisable to appear just then before the public, a single spy, when the "battalions" had been so hooted. Holloway agreed to wait; and the suspense, as in most other instances, served to increase his estimation of the thing waited for. Having armed himself with courage to undergo an operation, it was a hard thing to sit bound in his chair, waiting the convenience of the operator. The ministry might change; or he might himself pay the debt of nature, before the premier paid the debt of gratitude; and go down to the family vault, without having a coronet engraved on his coffin plate.

Thus, the dilemma which fidgetted poor Barnsley month after month on the threshold of parliament, kept the whole family of Holloway in a most amphibolous position ;—with a two-fold aspect, like the shield set up in the crossway, which was one side gold, one side silver.

The two prim Misses were afraid of appearing suspiciously dignified, or superfluously condescending. The family coach wanted reparation, but it was absurd to launch a new one that might require revarnishing after its armorial illustration ; and Mrs. Holloway, when looking at her tea-spoons, or her hall-chairs, could scarcely resist the temptation of issuing premature orders for the grand reform. Yet to the inquisitive congratulations of her humdrum country neighbours, the old lady was invariable in her reply of—“ Bless your heart,—even if it *was* so,—for *you* I should always remain plain Mrs. Holloway !”

Such was the situation of affairs when the

epoch of Lord Shoreham's majority arrived; and it was tacitly understood that old Holloway would be gazetted as Lord Withamstead of Withamstead, in the County of Kent, between the ensuing prorogation of parliament and its re-assembling for business. The two elderly young ladies heaved a sigh as harsh as a north-wester, at the disappointment of having to appear among the Hon. Misses Devereux and Drewe undistinguished from the vulgar herd of Sullivans and Barnsleys; little suspecting that the proud family of Hawkhurst looked down on such distinctions from refinement of mind, as much as Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, from coarseness; — that while Closeman gave his old neighbour a punch in the side wherever he met him, exclaiming—"Well, so you're going to be made a lord?—much good may it do you!" Sullivan would not have adverted to such a thing as a newly created peer in the squire's presence, any more than have "*parlé de corde dans la maison d'un pendu.*"

Meanwhile, in their uncoroneted family-coach, the Holloways were making their way to Wynnex,—the respectable old couple, and the two sharp-edged Misses ;—while, driven by his servant in a handsome phaeton, came stupid George, the future ornament of the aristocracy, looking thicker and more consequential than usual.

“ Lady Shoreham seemed to wish us to come early,” said old Holloway to his wife. “ She wants me to be acquainted with the young Viscount previous to our formal meeting with the lawyers. Barnsley’s accounts have been some days in their hands ; so that there will be nothing for Lord Shoreham and his mother to do to-morrow, but give us our discharge. I venture to say, Barnsley has been as exact in all the forms of the business, as if he had been professionally employed. It has cost him much time and pains. No executorship was ever more conscientiously performed.”

“ Mr. Barnsley, Sir, you know, *was* formerly

in business," observed Miss Holloway, who had never forgiven his resistance to her project of settling herself as mistress of Stokes-hill Place.

"The ability to execute and the will, are two things, my dear," said her father. "Few men would have set aside their own convenience and interest, as my friend Barnsley has done. Lord Shoreham can never repay all he has effected for the property. One hundred and forty-three thousand pounds do we transfer tomorrow to that young man's hands, as the savings of his minority!"

"A large sum, certainly," said Miss Felicia Holloway, the sentimentalist of the family. "Still, if the late Lord Shoreham had united with yourself in the executorship and guardianship, his own two brothers, it would have relieved poor dear Lady Shoreham from the labour of participation in the education of her son. Mr. Drewe, who I fancy is in the diplomatic line, and Mr. Alfred Drewe in the

church, would have been more competent judges of the graces to be bestowed on a young nobleman, than a mere attorney."

"Come, come, — not a word against my friend Barnsley," interrupted the old gentleman. "Ask Lady Shoreham how *she* would have liked her two brothers-in-law for guardians? When the young Lord was given over in his infancy, Alfred Drewe was known to have large bets pending upon his survival. The mother of an only son is not likely to pardon such an outrage."

"Still," persisted Miss Felicia, "it would have been a great thing for an inexperienced youth of Lord Shoreham's expectations, to be guarded through the rocks and shoals of London life, by eyes so vigilant and hands so careful as those of his nearest relations. Lady Shoreham can do a great deal for her son; but she cannot escort him to clubs, or be his monitor at——"

"Pho, pho, pho!" cried the old gentleman.

“ You are talking of what you know nothing about. Pray did you ever see Alfred Drewe or his brother ? ”

“ Many years ago, Sir ;—twenty years, I fancy, when I was such a child that I remember nothing about them,” said Miss Holloway, so accustomed to prevaricate about her age, that she forgot the impossibility of deceiving her own father. “ I conclude Mr. Alfred resides at his deanery, in Lincolnshire ? ”

Even sober old Holloway could not refrain from a laugh at the idea of the flashy Alfred Drewe, confronting the fishiness of the fens !

“ You have guessed pretty wide of your mark,” said he. “ Do you recollect old Dr. Dodwell, the rector of Wynnex ? ”

“ Very faintly, Sir ; he was *very* old when I was a girl, and is now, I fancy, imbecile.”

“ He has not done duty these ten years,” resumed her father. “ He became so unintelligible in the pulpit after losing his last tooth, that the parish threatened to memorial

the archbishop; and Lord Shoreham was obliged to provide an efficient curate. All I wish to explain is, that he obtained the living from having been tutor to the late Lord and his brothers, most imprudently chosen after being buried his whole life in college, up to his chin in books. Knowing that the two younger Drewes were to fill fine family-livings, he fancied that what was good for Peter, was good for Paul; and tried to qualify *them*, as he had been *himself* qualified — by pedantry. But unluckily, old Dodwell, who was a very absent fellow, never perceived that it was his *elder* pupil, the future Viscount, who was becoming as addicted to black letter as the Gentleman's Magazine; while Alfred and Augustus became addicted, to the Lord knows what! The tutor was the only man in Oxford who did not know them to be the most dissipated young dogs in the university. In short, it seemed to wake the reverend divine from a dream, when Augustus was at length expelled from college;

while Alfred, with the greatest difficulty, accomplished his degree."

"Expelled from college?—How very dreadful!" exclaimed Felicia, with an air of girlish innocence.

"But it was on the education of his eldest pupil (then Lord Shoreham) that Dodwell relied for absolution," exclaimed her father. "When taxed with having made the young peer a pedant, he did not reply like Buchanan of King James, that 'twas lucky he had been able to make so much of him,' but cited the number of learned bodies of which Lord Shoreham was a member, and, like Quin of George III, exclaimed, '*I taught the boy.*'"

"I have always understood," said Miss Holloway, (at all events not understanding her father) "that Lord Shoreham was an eminent man. Did he not write that very thick book in your library about the arts cultivated among the Celts?"

"He wrote a thick book or two,—I know not

upon what subject—I am no antiquarian,” said the old Squire. “But I was talking of Dodwell. Many ill-natured people used to say that, absent as he chose to seem, his wits were smartly at work in this affair of Alfred and Augustus ; for as the latter could not take his degree and it was impossible for Alfred to hold *all* the family livings, Wynnex fell to the share of the old tutor. And there he has been planted for the last five-and-twenty years like a pollard willow in a ditch, superannuated the greater part of his time.”

“What a sad incumbrance on the parish !” said Miss Felicia.

“Lord Shoreham had as much to answer for in presenting a mere scholar and a man of sixty to such an office, as Dodwell in the careless education he bestowed on the two Drewes. For Alfred has turned out that flagrant character,—a buck-parson ; while Augustus, an idle, dissolute, inefficient man, has only been retained in his office to keep him out of the King’s

Bench. Such are the men whose example you think would have been more advantageous to their nephew, than that of my steady friend, John Barnsley."

"I was not aware, Sir," replied Miss Holloway, solemnly, "that the English aristocracy was thus unworthily represented."

"Then, my dear, I don't know where you put your eyes and ears," said her father. "The gentleman in the straw-hat who drove his drag against our carriage last spring as we were airing on the Hounslow Road, was parson Drewe; and the blockhead taken into custody behind the scenes the night of the riot at the opera, Augustus."

"You don't say so!—I saw in the papers that it was an Honourable Blank Blank. What a pity that Mr. Drewe should forget what is due to his caste!"

"Or due to himself," added her father. "However, Lady Shoreham has wisely kept the young lord out of their way. Had they been

admitted to any share in his bringing up, instead of the bank-stock receipts which my friend Barnsley showed me the other day, I would not give the young Viscount credit for a year's solvency. Between gamblers, horse-jockeys, and opera-dancers, poor Wynnex would have had but a poor chance."

"All's well that ends well!" observed Felicia. "A mis-directed education made the last Lord a bookworm; I trust his son will not turn out a miser. Barnsley, no doubt, will obtain complete ascendancy over him; and instead of encouraging him to field sports and manly pursuits, make him fancy an inkhorn a finer thing than a star to hang to his button-hole."

"My dear, you mistake John Barnsley," said her father, mildly. "Dearly as he loves a bit of red tape, you never saw him try to inspire any other man with the love of business. Barnsley can scarcely bear that a game certificate or excise-permit should be filled up in

the county by any one but himself. Had he been Lord Chancellor, he would have grudged his Vice a single cause. Aha ! Here we are, I declare, at the lodge-gates of Wynnex Abbey !”

CHAPTER VIII.

Use a more specious ceremony, I pray you, to the noble lords; for they wear themselves in the cap of the time; they muster true gait—eat, speak and move under the influence of the most received star; and, though the devil lead the measure, such are to be followed.

SHAKSPEARE.

LADY SHOREHAM, at the period of welcoming her guests from Withamstead, was a very happy woman:—she had attained the brightest epoch of her life. The being who, from the moment the bells of Wynnex church announced that an heir was born to the Abbey, had formed the aim and end of her existence, was again about to be proclaimed by those iron tongues, as having attained to man's

estate; and thrilling with the two-fold pride of being mother of a son and mother of a peer, she felt conscious (like the militia captain reviewing his troop, in the anecdote,) that the eyes of Europe were upon her!

The Viscountess was of opinion that in her son she had achieved a *chef-d'œuvre*. Nothing on her part had been neglected to render him perfect, according to the acceptation of those with whom she lived. A handsome looking, high-spirited lad, he had accomplished a pony when other boys of his age can scarcely manage a donkey; and been seen at the Italian Opera, when other boys limit their enjoyments to a Christmas pantomime. He had been sent to Eton and Oxford, nearly two years younger than Browns and Smiths are considered strong enough for the tug of school-boy wear and tear; and, finally, was known at Tattersall's and Crockford's, when young gentlemen of his years scarcely attain a tail to their coatee. He had, in short, been admirably brought up!

When spending his vacations with his family at Paris, Mesdames the Countesses of this, that, and the other, used to whisper to each other that so charming a creature deserved to be Parisian born; and not a tradesman in Bond Street but had issued a certificate of celebrity, that young Shoreham was one of the most promising chaps about town.

The Viscountess was enchanted!—Few women are invested with such absolute authority in the education of a son, and no woman could have exercised it more entirely to her own satisfaction. She had affected no tyrannic control over Shoreham; but left it to the admirable school of morals and manners in which he was placed, to form his disposition. He had lived in the best company; he had acquired the best tone. He was (as the beautiful Comtesse de Fremont had called him at fifteen—and as Lady Catalpa called him now)—a charming creature. The results of so much forbearance on his mother's part, would

doubtless be repaid by the concession of unlimited influence over his conduct. He would fall in with her expectations, and increase the small fortune of his sisters; and perhaps, of his own accord, replace the advantages and allowances she forfeited by his attaining his majority. But this was of secondary importance. Lady Shoreham's main object was, that her son should become a leading man in fashionable society.

It is true that, for the last year, she had experienced occasional uneasiness which she confided neither to her daughters, nor to Barnsley. Lord Shoreham had chosen to pass the preceding winter at Melton with Parson Drewe, and was familiarly known at Newmarket; had a particularly private box at the Olympic Theatre, and a particularly public one at the Italian Opera. He was seen in the park, and reported in the newspapers, as the companion of flashy foreign counts, living on their wits, and having very brilliant wits to live on; and

the cavalier of married ladies, of somewhat equivocal notoriety. All this, Lady Shoreham held to be but part of the routine inevitable to his social position. But she knew from long observation that there is a crisis in a lordling's life, when, like the frost-hemmed French soldiers in Russia, they must either march on, or march no more. A little touch of Crockford's, Newmarket, and the corps de ballet, would do poor dear Shoreham no harm, provided it were touch and go; but if the attraction proved too much for him, and he attached himself for life to hazard, the turf, and the green-room, there was an end of his prospects. She appreciated the dangerous charm of bachelor society. She knew that, if once settled as a star of that glaring galaxy, there was no hope of retrieving him to become the centre of a system of his own.

Such was the motive of Lady Shoreham's assiduity in furnishing the Abbey in a style to remove all affectation of the hunting box.

Had she left Wynnex in the rough-and-ready style of disorderliness to which it was reduced by the lapse of years, there would have been a pretext for quartering all St. James's Street within its gates; but the Alhambra saloons, and Etruscan bathing-rooms, and *moyen age* galleries and vestibules *she* had created, rendered it too luxurious and enervate a retreat for hunting-coats, and pilot-jackets. There could be now no excuse for not inviting her and his sisters to become his guests; and she was determined to profit by the privilege to the exclusion of less desirable inmates, until the choice of some creature as charming as himself to be Lady Shoreham, should reduce her to the humbled position of Viscountess Dowager. She would then be content to depart in peace. Once married, there was no probability of Shoreham's falling into a system of dissipation derogatory to his place in society.

It has been already admitted that, next in

her Ladyship's estimation to her own children, stood her brothers and sisters. She would have been delighted that Shoreham's choice should fall on one of Lord Tynemouth's daughters; and the frank liveliness of her nieces seemed highly in favour of such an event; shy boys of one-and-twenty, being so readily captivated by the manners of persons easy of access. The fêtes at Wynnex would throw the young man into Flora and Jessie's society more than he had ever been in London; and she determined to favour every opportunity of bringing them together. The Holloways, Barnsleys, and Sullivans, accustomed to live in close and intimate neighbourhood, would doubtless herd together; while the Devereux girls, Brereton, and her nephew Sir Ross, would as naturally form a coterie apart.

Meanwhile, she was in the highest spirits. The tradesmen had been punctual in achieving their preparations; the servants were all activity, in expectation of the customary gra-

tuities of the morrow ; and though Lady Shoreham would have preferred that her son should arrive a few days before the eventful 22nd, in order to fix the extent of these and similar benefactions, she was too much accustomed to content herself with Shoreham's proceedings to find fault on such an occasion. Barnsley had complied with her hint, to leave five thousand pounds floating, in the hands of Messrs. Closeman and Co. of the Westerton bank, to meet unexpected exigencies ; and all that was requisite to draw it forth, was the magic signature of " Shoreham."

The sun shone,—a bright searching October sun,—over the dahlia beds, and clustering China roses. The conservatories were in admirable bloom ; the newly fitted rooms wore their brightest gloss ; — and fires sparkled and logs crackled within doors, though the woods and plantations had scarcely yet lost a leaf. All was mirth and merriment at the

Abbey. In the village and servant's hall, no less than in the gilded saloon

Lo ! all went merry as a marriage bell !

Even Margaret Barnsley, at first so shy and strange, was now made quite at home by the familiarity of the Devereux, and the good breeding of their cousins ; and instead of the anxiety with which she had looked forward at first to the arrival of her father and the Hawkhurst family to give her courage, she began to feel extremely uncomfortable, at the idea of seeing the Sullivans. She had discovered with some satisfaction from Brereton, that poor Edward was gone into Norfolk ; but Helen !—how should she ever be able to support the coldness of Helen ?—

While the ladies were sitting together in the library, waiting the arrival of the expected guests, these ideas weighed on poor Margaret's spirits. At length, her attention was roused

from the book she was attempting to read, by Jessie Devereux's inquiries of her cousin Lucilla concerning the people who were coming.

"This guardianship business is a sad bore," was the first sentence Margaret overheard, "because it obliges Shoreham to have his lawyers down. But, after to-morrow, all that will be over, and we expect the Walmers,—the Marstons,—and a good many people from the other side of the country."

"The mere neighbourhood of Westerton, does not seem to present much in the way of attraction?" observed Flora.

"Nothing whatever. The Holloways are horrors; and Mr. Brereton is the only one of the Sullivan's of the family who has mixed in the world. After our first popularity-civilities mamma intends advising Shoreham to drop the neighbourhood as much as possible, and depend on London for society. Scarcely forty miles

from town, you know, one need not squirefy ourselves to death, for want of a soul to talk to!"

And when, ten minutes after having uttered this speech, Margaret saw the Drewes receive Mrs. Holloway and her two stiff daughters almost as graciously as they had received herself, she trembled to think how near she had been bestowing her regard and friendship, in return for such hollow civilities.

"My son is not yet arrived," said the Viscountess, in reply to the inquiries of old Holloway. "Young men always find so much to do at the moment of leaving town."

Soon afterwards she had to renew the same apologies, with greater ceremony, to the Sullivans; the solemn formality of old Sullivan and the personal claims of Mr. Brereton's mother, seeming to entitle them to higher consideration. Helen, indeed, was received by the young ladies with more than their usual mechanical courtesy; but instead of appre-

ciating it with the timid humility of Margaret or the vulgar obsequiousness of the Misses Holloway, she accepted their attentions as her due, and crossing the library towards the spot where Margaret stood blushing and uneasy, shook hands with her young friend so cordially, as to leave Margaret in doubt whether she could be aware of what had been passing at Hawkhurst during her absence.

But the unembarrassed manner in which Miss Sullivan, after a few minutes' desultory conversation, observed, — "Edward is gone to my uncle's in Norfolk. He left home before we returned from St. Leonard's, or I should have persuaded him to postpone his visit till after the gay doings here," satisfied Margaret, that the old gentleman and his son had kept their disappointment a secret from the rest of the family. The Drewes and Devereuxs with Margaret and Helen, were soon clustered together at the conservatory end of the library *cheeping*, of a thousand young

lady-like topics—new music, new works, new patterns; questioning Miss Sullivan of her sailing, and boating, and bathing expeditions at St. Leonards, and recounting former exploits of their own. Even the inexperienced Margaret could not help admiring how Helen Sullivan's superiority in mind and manners over those to whom she was inferior in rank and superficial accomplishments, shone out, in the first half-hour they passed together. Helen seemed inaccessible to the raptures with which the Drewes spoke of the sea, the shore, the delights of yachting, the enchantments of bathing; and when Flora and her sister questioned her of the society of St. Leonards, whether the Duchess of Avon still gave parties, or Lady St. Lawrence was to pass the winter there, Miss Sullivan replied with so unculprit-like an air, that she was unacquainted with either and had heard nothing of them at St. Leonards,—that the Miss Holloways, who from a distance caught

phrases of the conversation of the young party they dared not join, wondered at her heroism ! They felt that, in her place, they should have lacked courage to expose themselves to the contempt of their noble associates.

But it would have been difficult to despise Helen Sullivan!—There was something so high-minded in the speaking glances of her eyes, something so prompt in her movements, so decided in her step,—and above all, something so candid in every word she uttered,—as to insure respect and admiration. Margaret, who had been for a moment dazzled by the lively indiscretion of speech of Flora and Jessie (arising less from frankness than the difficulty of holding their tongues,) now recognised once more the beauty of that high-toned sincerity of character, which her timid nature had long looked up to with veneration in the sister of Edward Sullivan.

Even when the group of girls were talking together of such nothingnesses as fashions,

dances, and the morrow's ball, the distinction of Helen above her companions was thoroughly apparent. Although she interested herself in all that seemed to concern them, an intelligent observer might have detected at once the superiority which was said to be distinguishable in Edmund Burke while sheltering from the rain under an archway. Her brother Brereton came in from the billiard-room, and after a supercilious salutation to the Holloways, presented to his sister, at that gentleman's request, his friend Sir Ross Carmichael; when Helen, neither drawing back into primness after the Holloway style, nor launching into the flippancy after the Devereux style because a fashionable young man was added to their circle, addressed a few words to the new comer; then returned to her previous conversation.

“ Shorcham is late,” observed Sir Ross, addressing his cousin. “ I should not be surprised if he was not to arrive till after dinner.”

“ Oh! he is not the last,” said his sister

Mary, putting up her glass to investigate how many might be missing.—“ Mr. Barnsley has not yet made his appearance ; and the dressing bell has not rung.”

“ My father is usually late,” Margaret ventured to observe, “ but he is always so busy !”

“ And Shoreham so idle !”—said Jessie Devereux. “ Extremes meet, you see.”

“ I wish they may ; nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see Mr. Barnsley and Shoreham enter the room,” said Lucilla, lowering her voice, “ for I see mamma is growing uneasy at my brother’s non-appearance.”

And Margaret, who had not hitherto ventured to look towards the side of the room where Lady Shoreham was placed, lest she should encounter the eye of Mr. Sullivan, now hazarded a glance in that direction, and noticed that an anxious flush was indeed overspreading the cheeks of the lady of the house.

But old Sullivan was not by her side. She could discern the outline of his spare lofty figure, as he stood pompously engaged in county-talk with his brother member of Withamstead Hall;—looking very much like what he was called by Closeman, the wag of Westerton,—Pompey's pillar in a mist.

Mr. Sullivan, indeed was a personage awful in the sight of many besides Margaret Barnsley; reserved, haughty, and soured by an habitual gout, which he took care to designate as “hereditary,” as if anxious to have it understood that it was a gout peculiarly his own, distinguished from the plebeian disorder afflicting his coachman and butler. Always unsociable, since the death of Lord Shoreham and the migration of the Woodgates, he felt that there was not a soul left in the neighbourhood worthy of unloosing the latchet of his gouty shoe. Barnsley, an object of especial detestation to him, had made himself endured only by the officious zeal with which he saved

the great man of Hawkhurst Hill, (a descendant of Witikind the Great, and brother-in-law to Lord Brereton, and the Duke of Grantville,) a thousand disagreeable encounters with the pitiful littlenesses of borough-botheration; and when his son Edward demanded permission to pay his addresses to Miss Barnsley, it needed all the young lady's heirship to five thousand a year, to reconcile the proud old gentleman to the notion of the alliance. But it was not till Edward had again and again protested that he felt sure of having made an impression on the affections of Margaret, that Mr. Sullivan condescended to write a letter of proposal; the rejection of which caused him the bitterest vexation he had ever been fated to experience.

That the *ci-devant* attorney should be insensible to the honour of his alliance, had not entered into his calculations. He could not forgive himself for having courted such an affront,—he could not forgive Edward as its

origin; and his son was forced to take refuge for a time from his father's reproaches, in a visit to his uncle the Duke. Mr. Sullivan would gladly have fled there too, to escape the annoyance of an encounter with Barnsley at the Wynnex fêtes. But he felt it his business to be there, maintaining among the county families the high station he was entitled to hold; nor could he, at that moment, have quitted Hawkhurst without making a confession to his wife and daughter of a humiliation, which he had exacted a promise from Edward to keep a profound secret, even from his sister and mother.

The hateful point was the necessity of eating at the same board and dipping in the dish with Barnsley. They had met but once,—“ ’twas in a crowd,”—since the catastrophe; and now, as he stood in the window listening to his brother member's rigmarole about some town-hall dilemma of “ Smith insisted upon it, but Brown would not hear of it,” his anxious eye

glanced ever and anon beyond old Holloway's portly outline, to the door through which Barnsley was to enter.

He had, however, nothing to fear. Barnsley, —who, though he felt the necessity of being early at the Abbey in order to impart assurance to the noble minor receiving, for the first time, so large a party, had no mind to expose his coolness with the Sullivans to the notice of their neighbours—determined to dress at Stokes-hill for dinner, and arrive at the last moment. In short, the dressing-bell rang and the party dispersed towards their several apartments, before either the Viscount or the executor made his appearance.

Poor Lady Shoreham was now in a panic. She felt the strange appearance it would wear to the county and her friends, if her son should fail her at such a moment; and began to fear that the prospect of having to do the honours of his house for the first time, to four or five hundred guests, besides making a speech to the

tenantry, and a civil acknowledgment to the executors, had been too much for his courage. As soon as she had escorted Mrs. Sullivan and Mrs. Holloway, as in precedence bound, to their rooms, she returned hastily to the library ; for the welcome sound of a carriage had reached her ear.

But, alas ! it was only the London solicitor in his chaise and four ; summoned by the fidgety Barnsley to attend upon the occasion.

Scarcely, however, had she turned Mr. Fagg over to the butler to be conducted to his dressing-room, when Barnsley himself was announced.

“ My dear Sir,” she exclaimed, cordially extending her hand, “ you see me in the greatest perplexity !—Not a word have I heard of my son for some days past. He promised to be here on the 21st, early in the day ; and now it is nearly six o’clock, and I begin to tremble lest the horror which all young men of his age have of the word ‘ business,’ should keep him

away altogether ! Between ourselves, I fancy we had better have put off signing these executorship and guardianship accounts till next week. But it is too late to think of it now ; and, if my son should not make his appearance to-day, I must trouble you to take the head of the table. My brother Lord Tynemouth is so complete a stranger here, that he would be very little resource to me on such an occasion."

Barnsley bowed assentingly ; and Lady Shoreham, about to quit him to hurry through her dinner toilet, was gratified to observe that in *his*, Lord Shoreham's executor wore a highly respectable country-gentlemanlike appearance. Barnsley was really a handsome looking man, when his brows were unbent and his pockets dispossessed of the packets of papers too often imparting squareness to his waist. At the present moment, indeed, his countenance shone with redoubled lustre. To do the honours of Wynnex Abbey, in presence of the Sullivans of

Hawkhurst, the dear friends and relatives of the Woodgate family, was all he could desire ! For once, he anticipated as much delight from cutting up a haunch, as from drawing up a case for counsel's opinion.

But while he stood bowing to the Viscountess, a sudden tumult arose in the great hall ; and the yelping of dogs, the swearing of grooms, the neighing of horses, and the vociferous laughter of several strange voices, caused the colour to rise in Lady Shoreham's face.

“ It is my son ! ” cried she, full of joy, yet full of apprehension.

And at that moment, a pretty-faced, undersized young man, with a velvet travelling-cap on his head, and a pea-jacket on his shoulders ; — his hands in his pockets, and a cigar in his mouth, shuffled into the vestibule !

CHAPTER IX.

The one is too like an image, and says nothing ;—the other too like my lady's eldest son—evermore talking.

SHAKSPEARE.

“ My dear boy!—I was afraid you were lost!”—cried his mother. “ Mr. Barnsley, Lord Shoreham; Shoreham, my love, Mr. Barnsley, to whom we are all so much indebted.”

Barnsley bowed encouragingly to his young *protégé*; and Lord Shoreham, taking the cigar from his mouth, but not the cap from his head, muttered some unintelligible civility while his mother led the way into the library.

“ You are very late,” said she, addressing

Lord Shoreham. "The dressing-bell has rung. Every body is come; it wants only five minutes of six, and we dine at six precisely"

"They must put off dinner," replied Lord Shoreham, coolly. "My fellows will be a quarter of an hour getting out my traps; and Gus won't be here these ten minutes."

"*Gus?*"—

"He chose to come with the parson in his britschka, on account of my smoking; and, by Jove! I smashed them like fun, giving them the go-by at the turnpike."

"Gus! — The Parson!" — faltered Lady Shoreham. "You surely have not brought down your uncles?"

"Didn't you get my letter?"—demanded her son, planting himself before the fire on the hearth rug, with his hands again ensconced in the pockets of the pea-jacket.

"What letters?"—

"Saying that my uncles must be present at the celebration of my coming of age.—Just

like the parson!" he continued, perceiving from his mother's wondering face that this was the first intimation she had received of such a calamity. "I gave it him to put into the letter-box at Crockford's, as he was going up the steps; and I dare say 'tis still in his pocket, unless his rascal took it out at night to light his pipe."

Lady Shoreham stood for a moment aghast.

"But, my dear boy, this is really a most unreasonable proceeding!" faltered she, at last. "There literally is not a bed in the house. I had the greatest difficulty in making out one for our friend Mr. Barnsley."

"Why who the devil have you got here?" inquired Lord Shoreham, with an air of disgust.

"All the families of the immediate neighbourhood; besides my brother Tynemouth, and——"

"Well, well," interrupted Lord Shoreham, "let who will be turned out, room must be

made for Gus and the parson. My uncles are the only people *I* have invited, and they must be properly accommodated. How deuced unlucky that you did not get my letter."

"Rather say, unlucky that you did not——"

"Shoreham, my boy!" shouted a strange voice, as a strange head, in a strange straw hat, was thrust into the library,—“are you here or hereabouts?”

“Come in, Alfred, come in!” cried the dutiful nephew, without stirring from the hearth-rug; while Lady Shoreham escaped through the saloon, to recover her self-possession and give the necessary orders; and Barnsley bowed and stared, as the extraordinary figure of Parson Drewe advanced into the room, gaitered and jacketed for his journey as other men equip themselves for a shooting expedition.

“Where’s Gus?” inquired Lord Shoreham.

“In confab with the head coachman—finding

out whether there's a tailor at Westerton he can trust to mend the spring of the britschka," said Alfred Drewe, throwing himself into a chair, and placing his muddy leather gaiters on a beautiful ottoman embroidered by the fair hand of his niece Lucilla.—“That was a clever smash you gave us at the toll-bar;—and faith, my fine fellow, you must pay for it!”

“By Jove,—I thought you were over!” cried Lord Shoreham, laughing heartily at the recollection. “But, I say, Alfred, what the deuce did you do with that letter of mine?”

“What letter?—To Lady Catalpa?”

“No, no—to my mother.”

“Your mother?—Devil a word do I remember about the matter!—I took Lady Cat's myself, as an excuse for a call. If you trusted me with anything for the post, I dare say I gave it to my tiger to drop in; and the young dog (who is apt to take a drop too much) seems to have dropped all recollection of the business.”

“ Very unlucky !” said Lord Shoreham.
“ But we must make the best of it.”

“ By George,—how they have ruined the place,” ejaculated Parson Drewe, looking round.
“ How easy to see, by all these gimcracks, that a woman’s finger has been in the pie ;—(hope it won’t prove a *pigeon* pie — eh ! Shoreham ?) —Not a chair for a fellow’s legs, when he comes in from shooting ;—and, instead of a good comfortable rug before the fire, for man and beast to stand or lie on, a strip of velvet painted to look like a leopard’s skin !—Why not a real leopard’s skin at once ?—Except, now I think of it, that they’re all bought up for the Bloomsbury hammercloths. Tigers are sure to sport a leopard’s skin.”

“ Come, come, don’t put your foot into it,” cried the young peer. “ I’ll take odds that the mayor of Westerton has got one, at this moment on his family coach. But here comes Augustus. Take it coolly—for he’s in a devil of a way about the britschka.”

Barnsley felt uncomfortable; and but that his black silk stockings and white waistcoat left no pretext for retiring to dress, would have been heartily glad to get out of the room. The “devil of a way” of a man recently taken up as disorderly in a row at the opera, excited fearful surmises in his mind. What, therefore, was his surprise when, the library door having opened an inch or two and shut again, a spare, middle aged man, of formal demeanour and immoveable countenance, traversed the room like clock work, seated himself gingerly in a chair, and began flipping off the dried spots of mud contracted by his nether habiliments during his journey.

“Well, what do the fellows say ;—is it much of a smash?”—inquired the parson.

“Not much,” replied Augustus, in a calm, dry, voice. “We shall get back to town with it, and then it must go to Hobson, (Hobson’s your man, I think ?”) addressing his nephew, “and be done up. The linings are ruined,

and the scratch can't be got out without varnishing."

Barnsley, startled by the quiet apathy of the modern dare-devil, was shocked to perceive the proverb reversed, and that for "Nunky pays for all," was in future to be read "nephew." — He almost shuddered when he thought of the hundred and forty-two thousand pounds to be transferred on the morrow!

"We have but five minutes to dress for dinner," said Lord Shoreham, deferring to a more convenient season any remarks he might have to make on this summary arrangement.

"Then I shall wait for supper!" was the quiet reply of Augustus. "Between a journey and a meal, a bath is indispensable. Is it Lady Shoreham's custom to dine at six o'clock?"

"The custom of the country, I fancy."

"And a deuced good custom, too!" cried Alfred. "Shoreham, my boy! I hope you're not ass enough to have a French cook? A

French cook may be a good thing in France; where the devil sends the meat, no matter where the cooks come from. But 'pon my soul, to see one of those frog-faced fellows larding a side of venison, or stewing down a fine turbot till you might card it into wool, is enough to drive one distracted."

"I know nothing, at present, of the system here," said Lord Shoreham, spoiling a fine solid glowing fire by a superfluous poke; "but let me hear of any thing French in *my* kitchen except truffles or capers, and out of the window it goes—neck or nothing."

And after a vehement, master of the house-like-ring, he desired the groom of the chambers to show him to his room, following him across the hall arm in arm with the parson; while Augustus remained stationary before the fire, gently caressing his own shins.

"A very fine young man, Sir!" observed Barnsley, after a silent *tête-à-tête* of some minutes.

“ Who, Sir,—my brother?”—demanded Augustus in the same quiet voice.

“ I meant Lord Shoreham,” said Barnsley, with a patronizing smile, amazed at the gentleman’s dulness. “ I had the honour of knowing the late Lord well.”

“ Sir, you have the advantage of me:—I never knew any one less !” observed Augustus, as impassive as before, but beginning to stroke his chin instead of his legs.

“ Have you brought down any thing new, Sir?”—demanded Barnsley, after another trying pause.

“ Nothing but a pair of pumps,” replied Augustus Drewe, as drily as ever.

“ You misunderstand me, my dear Sir,” said Barnsley ; “ I wished to inquire if there was any thing new in town when you left it ?”

“ Asparagus is in, and, I fancy, sea kail,” replied Augustus vacantly ; and Barnsley perceiving at length that he was mystified, and doubtful whether to resent as an affront

what might be only the common place of an eccentric, like "Gus," wisely took up the newspaper to screen his irritation. In the course of a few minutes, he heard the party assembling in the adjoining saloon in which it was the custom of the house to await the ringing of the second bell; and was about to proceed thither, leaving the silent gentleman to the enjoyment of his own ineffability, when Lord Tynemouth, entering the library to deposit a pamphlet he had taken to his own room, bestowed a more than commonly civil welcome on Barnsley, whom he considered an invaluable friend to the widowed Viscountess.

"Ha! Drewe, my dear fellow," cried he, perceiving Augustus, in the midst of his salutations to Barnsley, "what are you doing here in boots, with the second bell about to ring? When did you arrive?"

"In the course of the morning."

"You did not come, then, with Shoreham?"—

"We came together."

“ But *he* arrived only half an hour ago.”

“ Indeed?—I never wear a watch.”

“ Better go and dress,” said Lord Tyne-mouth good-humouredly. “ We shan’t wait for you.”

“ Most likely I shall have to wait for *you*,” replied Mr. Drewe, “ I always dine on the second course.”

“ Ay, ay?—stick to your old Oxford stint, eh?—roast fowl and apple pie?”

“ Certainly a modern dinner does occupy a most unreasonable space of time,” observed Barnsley, in a deprecating tone.

“ But, my dear Drewe,” resumed Lord Tyne-mouth, who did not wish the harmonies of the evening to be interrupted by the oddities of his nephew’s uncle, his own collegefriend, “ we have half a dozen pretty women of our party ;—sure-you don’t intend to appear in dishabille?”

“ Why not?—They have my full permission to appear in theirs!”—

“ I don’t speak on their account,” said Lord

Tynemouth, with a significant glance at Barnsley; "but Sir Horton Losely, who is staying here, appears every day at dinner in his shooting jacket; and if you favour us with your travelling-dress, the ill-natured world will say, as it has so often said before, that you are aping him."

"Thank you, for the hint," said Gus, leisurely rising. "I would not have it said I dressed my stable-boy after Loseley." And without further remonstrance, he quitted the room.

"I'll lay my life," said Lord Tynemouth laughing heartily at the success of his stratagem, "that Drewe will appear at table in a court dress, lest his originality should be suspected. Considering how strange a fellow he is by nature, I can't understand why he should affect strangeness! Most eccentric people are so from absence of mind, and not taking note of the customs of the world; my friend, Drewe, takes note of them only to bid them defiance."

“ A very singular person! I never saw him before, except at the late Lord Shoreham’s funeral. He does not seem to recollect me,” observed Mr. Barnsley.

Lord Tynemouth, who felt certain that Drewe not only perfectly recollected the interloping executor, but that much of his recent oddity arose from dissatisfaction at finding himself in Barnsley’s company, replied evasively—“ His whole life long Augustus Drewe has been doing the most outrageous things, as methodically and quietly as a quaker. With all the parson’s slang and noise, he is less of a rake than Augustus, who never speaks above his breath or moves faster than a tortoise.”

“ I trust in Heaven,” said Barnsley, more energetically than was his wont, “ that they will not lead their nephew into mischief. It will be a sad thing if, after all the pains Lady Shoreham has taken with and for that young man, his two uncles should persuade him to turn the house out of windows.”

“ Or his mother and sisters out of doors,” thought Lord Tynemouth; but notwithstanding his respect for Barnsley’s financial abilities, he did not think it necessary to trust him with the dawning apprehensions of the Viscountess.

The dinner, meanwhile, in spite of the contrariety by which it was preceded, passed off brilliantly. There were enough county people to make it pleasant to each other, and enough ex-county people, to lend animation to the natives. The two honourable uncles and Sir Ross being of the family, and in some measure at home, Lady Shoreham was supported by Holloway and Sullivan who talked to each other across her, throughout dinner, one of himself, the other of his farm, fancying themselves extremely attentive to their neighbour. But Lady Shoreham took no heed of her two elders. Her eye was fixed upon the chair which poor Barnsley had been so near filling, and which, to her horror and disgust, she saw occupied by Alfred Drewe. As they were tak-

ing their places, her son had retreated from the seat assigned to him, exclaiming—

“Come, come, Parson,—we must have you in the chair!—Nobody can say grace here but you; and nobody cut up a haunch like you in the three kingdoms.”

And having thus constituted him his delegate, the young Lord placed himself between Jessie and Flora Devereux; the only extenuating circumstance that could have pacified the wrath of his mother. Opposite to him and next to his sister Mary, a chair was left vacant, into which Augustus glided towards the end of the first course, attired in the perfection of a gentlemanly toilet; and as he concluded that his antipathy, Loseley, was seated out of sight on the same side of the table as himself, he made it a point to be as chatty and agreeable as possible. Miss Felicia Holloway, beside whom he was placed, could not reconcile it to herself that this well bred, well dressed, demure individual could be the dis-

solute Augustus Drewe, of whom her father had spoken in the morning, in terms of such severe reprobation.

Margaret Barnsley had now ample opportunity of gratifying her curiosity relative to the long dreamed-of Phoenix of Wynnex Abbey. Seated exactly opposite to Lord Shoreham, she found courage, while his attention was engrossed by his cousins, to take a survey of his person, and had no difficulty in deciding, that Lord Shoreham was almost as good-looking as his sisters had announced him. But even while admitting this, Margaret felt conscious of an unfavourable impression. There was an overbearing positiveness in every word he uttered; and a self-sufficient elation of manner,—a bold investigating expression of eye,—which revolted her. Her fancy had endowed the young Lord, educated under petticoat government with sisters only for his early associates, with a half-timid, half-chivalrous tone of romance; but Lord Shoreham sat

conversing with his pretty cousins in the tone of coarse raillery adopted by one school-boy towards another.

Meanwhile, poor Barnsley felt less at ease than he had ever expected to feel at Wynnex Abbey! In that room, where he had been accustomed to receive the tenants, and audit the accounts,—to issue his unimpugnable ukases and make his rules absolute,—he found himself suddenly sunk into nothingness, and sat on the well-stuffed red morocco dining chair, as uneasily as though it had been of red hot iron. The fates had placed him between Mr. Sullivan, towards whom he stood in so disagreeable a predicament; and Miss Holloway, whose personal dislike he fully returned. The previous impertinence of Augustus Drewe had disconcerted him. The ungraciousness of the young Lord, made him apprehend that he might have difficulties to encounter in the winding-up of his executorship accounts. He felt that Stokeshill had gained a disagreeable

neighbour; and Wynnex Abbey lost all its attractions. Even Margaret displeased him. Seated between the supercilious Brereton and Sir Ross, both more disagreeable than usual from their desire to merit the approval of the three fashionable men added to their party, she never opened her lips. Her fluttered countenance and unassured deportment, so different from that of the lively chatterers around her,—so different from the frank self-possession of Helen Sullivan,—were inconsistent with her claims on society, as heiress of Stokeshill. Among other vexations at that moment stirring up his ire, he felt that Miss Winston was not the preceptress he ought to have chosen to polish the manners of his daughter. A moment's collision with the world will sometimes serve to depreciate, in our estimation that which, by our own fireside, we have regarded as beyond the reach of censure; and could Mr. Sullivan have guessed the secret mortification of the man from whom he sat

pointedly averting his dignified countenance, his desire of vengeance would have been amply gratified.

A momentary glance of satisfaction, however, passed over his countenance, when he saw Lord Shoreham not only invite his daughter to take wine with him, but in the course of dinner repeatedly and pointedly addressed her. Margaret's replies, though flurried, were reasonable and lady-like; while the blush that overspread the delicacy of a skin to which the dark braids of her hair imparted almost dazzling whiteness, added wonderfully to her beauty. Of all the girls present, Margaret Barnsley was decidedly the prettiest. But even her father was surprised that Lord Shoreham should so soon have made the discovery, under so many disadvantages of manner.

A still more flattering distinction awaited her, when, after dinner, the party re-assembled. Lord Shoreham, — passing hastily through the drawing room, (in which Holloway, Sulli-

van, and Lord Tynemouth, were pottering over their coffee among the elderly ladies,) to the library, where the young people had taken refuge,—at once descried Margaret, alone, at the furthest end, turning over, for the twentieth time, Brookedon's Alpine scenery as a pretext for keeping aloof from the lively circle by whose sprightliness her spirits were overpowered. That he should condescend to take immediate possession of the vacant seat upon the sofa by her side, would have filled her with amazement, had she not remembered that, though only slightly presented to him before dinner in a group including the Miss Holloways and Helen Sullivan, the name of Barnsley must have appealed to his gratitude and sensibility. It was her father who was honoured in her person.

Margaret felt shocked indeed for not being more gratified by his attentions, when Lord Shoreham laughingly protested that her name and countenance were blended with his earliest

reminiscences ; and that it did not need the praises he had recently heard of her in the letters of his sisters, to bring her at once to his remembrance. “ Edward Sullivan and I have talked you over a thousand times,” said Lord Shoreham, with an arch smile. “ I say nothing of Brereton ; because he talks so much of every thing and every body, that one never listens to half he says.”

“ The Miss Devereux are going to sing,” said Margaret, by way of a signal of silence to her voluble companion.

“ With all my heart, if it amuses them,” said Lord Shoreman contemptuously. “ Are you fond of music !”

“ Passionately !—We have had music every night since I have been here. Your sisters sing and play delightfully !”

“ I am afraid they have sadly bored you ?” replied Lord Shoreham, so accustomed to the *persiflage* of his gay associates, that he concluded her to be quizzing. “ But young

ladies who lose half their lives in acquiring accomplishments, must of course lose the other half in displaying them. I shall take care they don't bore *me* with that sort of thing at Wynnex."

"*Bore?*" reiterated Margaret almost terrified at his inference;—"you surely do not imagine that I intended to——"

"Oh! you intended nothing but what was right and proper. I shall profit by your hint, and put a stop to their exhibitions."

"If you did but know how welcome what *you* call exhibitions are at Westerton! We never hear any good music. Your sisters first introduced to us that of Bellini, and Donizetti."

"Mightily obliged you were to them, no doubt, for the introduction!" said the Viscount, still fancying himself sneered at. "But if you want music, get my uncle Alfred to sing for you. The parson has the finest voice you ever heard;—equal to Braham's!"

“ In what style does he excel ?—Italian, like your sisters, or English glees, or—”

“ Alfred ?—Alfred sings any thing—every thing—either at sight or sound. His ear and memory are the most astonishing things !”

“ Could he not be persuaded to take a part with your sisters in some trio ?”—

“ Oh ! d—n trios !—Alfred will sing you something of his own ;—or if you like it better, something of Tommy Moore’s. Alfred sings some capital things ; ‘ the Dogs’-meat man,’ the—”

“ The dogs’-meat man ?” faltered Margaret, fancying in her turn that she was quizzed. ,

“ Do *you* sing it ?”—inquired Lord Shoreham.—“ Oh ! *do* sing it,”—cried he half rising from the sofa, as the extreme confusion of his companion seemed to give consent. “ I can teach you two famous new verses.”

“ Indeed I cannot,—I never even heard of it before,”—cried Margaret, her whole counte-

nance brightened by the effort which brought vivid blushes to her cheeks.

“ Lucilla shall sing it you to-morrow,” was his compassionate reply. “ You live a great deal in the country, I fancy ?”

“ Wholly in the country. My father goes to town ; but we always remain in Kent.”

“ So much the better,—for I mean to remain a vast deal in Kent myself,” he resumed, sprawling on the satin cushions of the sofa, with a degree of familiarity that would have dismayed Miss Winston. “ Lu and Mary tell me I shall be bored to death here ; that there’s not a soul worth a hang in the whole neighbourhood. But, by George, they may say what they will, that girl of old Barnsley’s is deuced handsome.”

Margaret started. Her ears must certainly deceive her !

“ Don’t you think so ?”—persisted Lord Shoreham ; and his eyes fixed upon the fine figure of Helen Sullivan, who was crossing

the library, after having accompanied her valetudinarian mother to her own room, served in some measure to explain the strange apostrophe of her companion. In the flurry of a first introduction to so many strange faces, he had evidently mistaken *her* for the daughter of Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst, and Helen for herself!—To undeceive him on this point was urgent. But how to begin?—Margaret's cheeks tingled—Margaret's voice faltered—she had not a word at her command.

“The attorney's daughter has none of her father's shoppy underbred look,” he added. “One *might* mistake *her* for a gentlewoman.”

“I fear you are under some mistake,” stammered poor Margaret.

“Mistake?—no! no mistake!”—cried Lord Shoreham, laughing, “I never saw a finer girl!”

“I meant to say,” faltered Margaret, “that ——”

But at this moment, Brereton approached with a supercilious air, to request Margaret would join Miss Sullivan at the piano.

“My sister wishes you to accompany her,” said he, addressing Margaret with unceremonious disdain.

“Indeed she must excuse me!” replied the trembling girl;—“I cannot sing to-night.”

“My dear,” interrupted her father, offering his hand to conduct her to the group of young ladies, “Lady Shoreham begs you will oblige Miss Sullivan, who has a cold, and cannot be prevailed to sing anything but a second.”

Margaret was again about to remonstrate, but a look from her father,—a look such as she was not accustomed to disobey,—sent her trembling to the instrument; and the Drewes, astonished at the excellence of her performance, and the purity of style acquired from the able organist of Westerton, could not recover their surprise at the diffidence

with which, during her stay at the Abbey, she had disclaimed all pretension to musical accomplishments.

But what was *their* surprise compared with the amazement of their brother?

CHAPTER X.

There are but two ways of doing anything with great people ; by making yourself considerable with them, or by making yourself agreeable.

ADDISON.

NEVER did a sovereign on the eve of abdication retire to rest with such elation of spirit as Barnsley, on the eventful night preceding Lord Shoreham's attainment of his majority ! He had noticed the *tête-à-tête* between the young Lord and his daughter ; he knew that Margaret had been especially distinguished—but nothing wherefore.

Already the vague matrimonial plot of his imagination seemed to thicken ; and on the

eve of relinquishing power and greatness, greater greatness was apparently about to be thrust upon him, in the face of the whole county of Kent. If a fine thing to have been executor to the old Viscount, it would be far finer to become father-in-law to the young one.

To do Barnsley justice, such notions were not the only ones tending to his gratification. He enjoyed the consciousness of his own well-doing. The noble roof over his head, so enhanced in prosperity under his administration might at that hour have been dismantled and dilapidated, under the executorship of the two Drewes.

He had not only done his best, but his best was eminently meritorious. Rejoicing like a Chancellor of the Exchequer over the returns of a favourite tax, he felt entitled to congratulate himself on the soundness of his head no less than the soundness of his heart. He had, in fact, done for conscience's sake, more than many an auditor of many a noble house per-

forms for the “con-sideration” of a thousand or two per annum!

He had noted, in the course of the day, the confidence entertained by the Wynnex tenants in the influence he was likely to exercise over their young Lord. In passing for the last time as a potentate through the three villages of the domain, he was stopped here, and arrested there, with entreaties for his interest at the Abbey. The conciliation of speech attempted by himself towards his intended constituents at Westerton, characterized the various petitions offered up to him at Wynnex. A word from him to my Lord, was to drain marshes, rebuild hovels, construct bridges, and replenish alms-houses!

Barnsley laid his head upon his pillow filled with visions of a Viscountess’s coronet adorning that of his daughter; and satisfied that though he should now have leisure for the legislation and improvement of Stokeshill, his

influence at Wynnex Abbey was to be greater than ever.

And Sullivan had seen all this!—Sullivan, by whose incivility he had been so pointedly aggrieved at the Magistrates' meeting! The arrogant esquire of Hawkhurst Hill could not but have observed that the damsel whom he had scarcely thought worthy his younger son, was courted with attentions far more flattering than those of Edward Sullivan; nor could poor Barnsley refrain from exultation at the thoughts of the distinction likely to be lavished upon Margaret on the morrow.

Such, and similar cogitations, kept the man of business waking till a late hour. Yet he was the earliest astir next morning; Lady Shoreham having commissioned him to see that all was right,—that the bonfires were properly stacked,—the pitch-pots in train for lighting up,—the ox likely to be warmed through,—the champagne to be thoroughly iced, — the

Roman candles to burn blue !—Relying on his activity, she wished to be at liberty to bestow her courtesy on her guests in satin and brocade ; leaving to Barnsley the frieze coats and calimanco petticoats.

But, on this occasion, Barnsley experienced for the first time from the upper servants of the Abbey and their London coadjutors, those resistances and impertinences which upper servants are apt to bestow upon interfering friends of the family.

Perhaps they had gathered sufficient indication of the altered aspect of affairs from the “ own gentlemen” of Parson Drewe and his brother, to warrant suspicion that Barnsley’s kingdom was taken from him and given to the Jews and money lenders ;—for their hints that all would be done properly and in its place, whether or no Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill put himself out of *his* to interfere with them, were as “ plain as way to parish church.”

Judging it better not to signalize his exit

from office by an explosion, he satisfied himself with sniffing silently in and out of the marquees, galleries, and ball-rooms, till breakfast was announced.

An early one for the guests in the house was to precede the grand affair prepared for those assembling from the four quarters of the county; and between the two, the Viscount, Viscountess and executors were to proceed into the steward's room, attended by the family solicitors, and by a scratch of the pen, set each other at liberty.

Nothing could be worse-timed than the arrangement; but as Mr. Holloway had a journey to perform into Shropshire on the morrow, Lady Shoreham coincided in the plan. She had got up a handsome gilt vase and inscription for Barnsley,—and Barnsley had got up a neat and appropriate speech in return; accusing himself of every executorial virtue, and recommending the young Lord to restrict himself to ready-money payments;—to fear God, honour

the king, and augment the portions of his sisters. The solicitors employed by Lady Shoreham declared that never had they seen a trust more ably or conscientiously executed than Barnsley's ; and he felt entitled, after such a display of financial economy, to crown his works with a sermon.

Scarcely however were the tea and chocolate, ham and chicken, dispatched, when old Holloway, with a face as long and doleful as an undertaker's bill, took Barnsley aside to inform him that, greatly to Lady Shoreham's mortification, her son would not hear of putting pen to paper till the whole of the minority accounts had been gone over by *his* attorneys, Messrs. Centpercent, of Cork-street, St. James's ; that her Ladyship's solicitor had already left the Abbey in high dudgeon ; that the vase was returned to its green baize, and the speech stifled in embryo !

“ I owe the lad no ill-will for what he is doing,” observed old Holloway ; who, having

never interfered in so much as the pruning of a plumtree at Wynnex, was wholly uncompromised by Lord Shoreham's mistrust. "Those two knowing uncles, you see, have put him up to the notion of never meddling with pen and ink till he is quite clear what he is about. The fact is, my dear Sir, that the boys of this age, instead of being dupes as they were in my college days, are keen and shrewd as if they had been twenty years about town! For a moment, I felt inclined to resent the poor young man's proceedings; but when I saw the deep concern of my old friend Lady Shoreham, and that very little incitement would produce, on her part, a violent out-break against her husband's brothers, I said to myself,—'Blessed are the peace makers,' and agreed to defer the winding-up of the accounts till after my return from Bridgenorth."

"Strange that her Ladyship should not have consulted *me* on the occasion," said Barnsley, looking exceedingly nettled.

“ My dear Sir; Lady Shoreham had not courage to talk to you on the subject. She deputed me, in order to spare your feelings as well as her own ; and if you are as kindly disposed towards the widow of our old friend the Viscount as I have always considered you, you will set the poor woman’s mind at ease, by seeming to take the thing in good part.”

And Barnsley was by no means sorry to receive this exhortation. He did not wish to parade himself under the review of Sullivan as a defeated general ; he did not wish, by taking offence, to overcloud the brightening prospects of his daughter. — Nay, though aware that a couple of money-scrivening attorneys might raise up delays and molestations to protract the settlement of the estate, he knew that he had only to claim the protection of Chancery to embalm his cause in the tears of Lord Eldon, and perhaps obtain a monument in the Chancery court to his integrity, as

the most upright of modern guardians and executors.

Barnsley's concluding sentence, therefore, was for peace; and when Lord Tynemouth, goodhumouredly fastening upon his arm, paraded him among the groups of guests to the archery-ground and new pheasantries, he felt that his cause was supported by the heads of the family.

He met Lady Shoreham with cordiality; and was only grieved to perceive, from a certain flush on her cheek and unquiet wandering of the eye, that she was experiencing great uneasiness on account of her son.

George Holloway kept following her about to tell her that "Lord and Lady Walmer were inquiring for Lord Shoreham;—that Lord and Lady Henry Marston were in the saloon looking after Lord Shoreham; and that the tenant's dinner was about to be served and waiting only for Lord Shoreham."

Instead of the gratification to her pride she had often anticipated of presenting to these Kentish dignitaries individually, and to the county collectively, her handsome son, accomplished into a finished gentleman by foreign travel and British scholarship, she stood alone upon her solitary lawn; while the young hero, in whose honour the bells were ringing and the squibbs squibbing, was locked up in the billiard-room with Gus and the Parson, and one or two of their St. James's Street specials.

Meanwhile, poor Margaret Barnsley was of neither the breakfast party nor the archery. Confined to her bed by an overpowering headache, she revolved again and again her mortifications of the preceding night. Neither the ringing of the village bells, nor the salvos of the field battery erected in the park, nor rumbling of carriages, nor clanging of military bands, nor swearing of footmen, nor slamming of doors,

nor stir and hum of the gathering multitude, could supersede the recollected tone of disdain in which the words “old Barnsley” and “the attorney’s daughter” had been uttered by Lord Shoreham. What was the meaning of this?—Her father was a man of fortune,—of character.—In what was he inferior to the Mr. Sullivan, whose name had been pronounced by the young Lord in a manner so much more respectful?—

Little as she knew of worldly distinctions, Margaret could not but discern the truth;—that she was living among people of a rank superior to her own; and that Lord Shoreham regarded the daughters of Lord Tynemouth and the niece of Lord Brereton in a different light from the daughter of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill;—an attorney bred, and born of parents, the existence of whose progenitors was proved only by the immutable laws of physiological nature!

Such, then, were the opinions and usages of society!—Margaret did not rebel,—she did not even murmur. It was scarcely possible to form a lower estimate than she had ever done of her personal claims to consideration. But she was sorry her father and Miss Winston had not made her more fully aware of the conventions of polished life; and spared her the humiliation of being overthrown from a false position.

To a man first wakening to the consciousness of obscurity of birth, a thousand ladders present themselves by which to climb up into light and distinction. He may fight or write himself into a name; and the very peerage itself is open to those who approach through the paths of legislative or military eminence.

But a woman has only one mode of achieving greatness,—a mode how infinitely little!—She must *marry for rank*; and more than one girl of sensitive temper and an ambitious spirit, has been taunted by such affronts as that under

which Barnsley's daughter was smarting, into flinging away her youth, beauty, and fortune, upon such things as an Alfred or Augustus Drewe !

There was no such fear, however, for Margaret. All she felt was double gratitude for the distinctions she had received from Mrs. Sullivan, Helen and Edward ; and the kindness recently shewn her by the Drewes and Devereuxs. She could easily refrain from those circles where her inferiority might provoke humiliation. She had her own sphere ;—an honourable and a useful one,—where it would depend upon herself to be happy. She only wished herself away from Wynnex,—back at unpretending Stokeshill,—back with the quiet governess, who, if she exerted herself little to give her pleasure, at least had never given her a moment's pain. Margaret felt that in the fresh air of her own secluded flower garden she should soon get rid of her head-ache. At the

Abbey, there was no remedy but Godfrey's salts, and a darkened chamber.

At length, late in the afternoon, came Lady Shoreham's confidential maid, with my Lady's regards and hopes that Miss Barnsley was better, a splendid ball dress, and garland of French flowers, exactly like those to be worn by her own daughters; and an offer that the young ladies' Parisian lady of the bed-chamber should officiate at her toilet.

It was in vain Margaret protested that to rise and dress was impossible. "La! Miss, my Lady would be so terribly disappointed!" seemed to the waiting-woman a sufficient plea to raise the dead.

Margaret was still debating, when a low knock was heard at her chamber door; and her father, preceded by her own maid Gladstone, made his appearance. Margaret's pale cheeks became flushed as she half rose from her pillow with gratitude, to think that papa should have been at the trouble to find her out in all the

confusion of the day ; but when, on seeing Lady Shoreham's beautiful and considerate presents he decided that she must rise and attempt to do them honour, she almost wished he had missed his way to her apartment.

The decree, however, had gone forth ; and as soon as he quitted her, the dutiful daughter arose, and with a heavy sigh commenced the preparations for her toilet. A set of opals and diamonds substituted by her father for the promised pearls, did not dazzle her into better spirits ; nor could even the raptures into which the French maid was thrown by the beauty of the long black silken hair she was deputed to arrange, divert her from her cares. Papa had insisted upon her trying to look her best, and her best she was trying to look. But though surprised (when obeying the orders of the *soubrette*, she cast a look on the swing glass) to see the alteration produced in her appearance by the first fashionable costume in which she had ever figured,—by the lustre of the satin

and blonde, the close-fitting elegance of the waist, the lustre of her jewels, the delicacy of her features,—Margaret did not so much as notice the brilliancy imparted to her countenance by the flush of fever, or the exquisite contrast between her raven hair and the dead and pearly whiteness of her skin. The notion that she was beautiful had never entered her mind. The French maid was the first person who had ever told her so; and the French maid appeared to her inexperienced judgment something between a mad woman and a monkey.

The second bell rang. The band of the Cinque Ports Militia had long been clanging in the great hall with cymbals (anything but “tinkling”)—the gastronomic hymn of “Oh! the roast beef of old England;” and Margaret, after divers false starts from the dressing room into the corridor, at length gained courage to glide rustling down the stairs, the balustrades of which were adorned with garlands of laurel and china roses.

She passed the guards, the gate, the hall,

with panting bosom and compressed lips, threaded the long array of servants waiting at the door of the saloon; and the butler, somewhat elated by the twenty-one years' old October, broached in honour of the day, gave out the name of "Miss Barnsley" in a tone considerably louder than became his accustomed breeding. Margaret heartily wished herself back in her own room when she found that the company were pairing off in couples to the dining room;—the first twenty of which were already out of sight, and among them, all her friends.

Lucilla and Mary, indeed, remained with the six or eight young ladies still to be led out. But they were laughing and chatting with Brereton, Carmichael, and several strange young men; and Margaret stood alone in the group of men nearest the door.

At last, it was *her* turn to go. The murmur

of inquiry excited by her extreme beauty, overawed her. She dared not stir alone across the room. She wanted only courage to retrace her steps, and run away. Her cheeks were flushed of deepest crimson,—her eyes fixed on the floor. Every one seemed waiting for her to move; when a friendly arm silently presented itself, and without waiting to see from whence it came, Margaret accepted it, and hurried on after the rest.

The noise of the room into which they passed, and the blazing lights with which it was illuminated, seemed to restore her to herself. Not a syllable was uttered by her companion. Having placed her in a vacant seat next to stupid George Holloway (beside whom the wiser maids of Kent were too wary to place themselves), he bowed, and ceding to the pressure of the throng of servants, moved towards the other side of the table to a chair next Helen Sullivan; and Margaret had only leisure to discover that her valiant, though not very

courteous knight, was no other than the ugly stranger who had intruded into the library on the day of her arrival at Wynnex, concerning whose mysterious disappearance it had never occurred to her to make inquiries.

On the present memorable occasion, Lord Shoreham, complying with his mother's private entreaties, condescended to occupy his fitting post; where he was of course flanked by the two great ladies of the county—the Countess of Walmer and Lady Henry Marston.

Margaret, accustomed to hear these personages so obsequiously spoken of by her father and the Westertonians, was amazed to observe the easy familiarity with which they were treated by their host. There was very little difference between the tone in which he addressed them, and the flippancy of his manner to herself the preceding night; and in spite of his good looks and good humour, she decided him to be the most unlordly young gentleman with whom she had ever been in company.

Stupid George Holloway, pure, at least, from slang and the vulgarities of club jargon, rose by comparison. Even Helen Sullivan's ill-looking friend, whose countenance, though forbidding, was all intelligence, and whose manners, though ungraceful, were strictly gentlemanly, seemed far better qualified to adorn the annals of the peerage than Lord Shoreham.

CHAPTER XI.

Kent, in the commentaries Cæsar writ,
Is call'd the civil'st place in all the isle ;
The people liberal, valiant, active, wealthy.

SHAKSPEARE.

SHORT leisure was allowed for sitting after dinner; for Lord Shoreham, as by custom established, was to open the tenants' ball, previous to that for which the musicians soon took their place in the orchestra of the painted ball room.

“ Lucky that such a day as this comes but once in our lives ! ”—cried he aside to

his uncles, as he proceeded to the discharge of his duties. "What up hill work!—By Jove, I'd rather be wheeler in the York heavy!" While Gus and the Parson, in spite of the assurances of the *maitre-d'hôtel* that the dinner-room must be cleared to make way for the supper tables, ordered more claret, took out their cigar cases, and "made themselves comfortable." These proceedings were duly reported to the Viscountess; but offensive as they were to her notions of elegance and decorum, she saw that the uncles were too positively supported by her son, to render interference safe. Her influence had kept their names out of the old Lord's will; but she saw it would avail nothing to keep their persons out of the young Lord's dining-room. Her task with her son was in fact sufficiently difficult, without the introduction of any such thorny theme of contention. Besides, she wanted him, by way of *amende honorable* to Barnsley, to open the ball with Margaret.

Neither Lady Walmer nor Lady Henry had daughters present. The Devereux were, in a sort, at home; and though many of the squires' daughters stood higher in importance than Miss Barnsley, none of them had positive pretensions to precedence such as might not be set aside.

Lord Shoreham objected of course;—it was his cue to object to everything proposed by his mother. “He was engaged to dance with Flora Devereux!” Lady Shoreham, “undertook to settle all with her niece.” “In that case, he should ask old Sullivan’s daughter. Miss Sullivan was a fine thorough-bred creature, with capital paces.” Lady Shoreham had the satisfaction of informing him that Miss Sullivan had been engaged, for a week past, to Sir Ross Carmichael. “In that case he should not dance at all.”

“But, my dear boy—the thing is unheard of!” remonstrated the too long indulgent mother. “It will be thought an offence to

the county if you do not dance. Pray oblige me by standing up for just *one* dance with Miss Barnsley: *then*, if you choose, you can go and join your uncles."

Still Lord Shoreham grumbled, and still Lady Shoreham entreated; but at length the prospect of buying off his release from the ball so as to finish the night with a rubber with the two Drewes and Brereton, prevailed. When Barnsley, who was stationed in the ball room in conversation with Lord Henry Marston, (about obtaining a charter for Denton Bay, a new harbour on the estates of the latter,) was startled by his companion's sudden inquiry—"Who is that lovely creature with whom Lord Shoreham is dancing?"—he had the satisfaction of perceiving all eyes fixed with admiration upon his daughter, little suspecting how repugnantly accepted as a partner by his ungracious ward!

Few of those in the habit of seeing Miss Barnsley in her dull routine of studious seclu-

sion at Stokeshill, plainly dressed, and unassumingly mannered,—had anticipated the sensation her beauty was destined to produce. It was immediately set down by two, out of the three hundred guests, that she was engaged to Lord Shoreham; and a great disposition to indulgence prevails towards a pretty girl on the eve of an advantageous marriage. The young ladies, apprehensive of appearing envious, protested that Margaret was all grace and loveliness; the old ones, anxious to pique their daughters for having missed such a match, declared that it was no wonder a girl of such gentle manners and excellent deportment, should make so fine a connexion; while the men, really captivated by her delicacy and softness, exclaimed on all sides that she was the prettiest girl who for many a year had done honour to the county of Kent. Barnsley, accustomed to think so little of his daughter, could scarcely believe his eyes and ears: and Lady Shoreham, con-

sidering herself sole creatress of Margaret's momentary triumph, began almost to regret the interference which proved the means of throwing her own girls and nieces completely into the shade. In spite of the fashionable airs of her daughters, those of Barnsley and Sullivan were decidedly the belles of the Wynnex ball.

Meanwhile Helen, who was left without a chaperon by Mrs. Sullivan's habits of early retirement, and her pompous father's habits of button-holding the greatest man present,—was compelled to have recourse to her brother for protection; and having retreated for a few minutes into the library from the heat of the ball room, she could not forbear reproaching him with his incivility towards her friend Margaret.

“Margaret Barnsley was nearly left to come into dinner alone!” said she, to the contemptuous Brereton. “She is such a good

creature ! Do, my dear William, show her, for my sake, a little attention."

"What would you have more?" replied Brereton. "Your *protégée* engrosses the honours of the evening?"

"No wonder !—she is so fresh looking—so pretty !—Margaret reminds me of a china rose-bud."

"A girl, with as much character as a sheet of white paper !"

"Remember her age ;—seventeen,—totally ignorant of the world."

"I recollect *you*, Helen, at seventeen—'tis no such mighty length of time ago !"—replied her brother ; "and you were never such a yea-nay specimen of young ladyism as that girl of Barnsley's !"

"That girl of Barnsley's !—Yes !—that is the motive which prevents your admitting her perfections. Were she not the daughter of a low-bred father, you would see, at

once, that she is worth twenty Miss Drewes, and—”

“ A thousandth part of a Helen Sullivan,” said Brereton gallantly—for he was really proud of his sister.

“ Do not think to disarm me with flattery. Consider the advantages Helen Sullivan has had, compared with that girl of Barnsley’s! Consider the careless father, the dull governess.—”

“ The unincidental home—the narrow circumscription of her studies”—continued Brereton. “ Yes! all *that* demands indulgence. She has seen nothing and read nothing; has had neither parents nor brother to enlarge her experience, and strengthen her character. While you were reading, that girl was stitching—eternally stitching,—under the eye of the most common place dolt that ever miscalculated the doctrine of passive obedience.”

“ And what is the consequence? That

Helen Sullivan is a self-willed, ungovernable girl, who presumes to find fault with her elder brother and keep him prisoner by her side that she may escape such a partner as George Holloway;—while Margaret,—all patience,—all humility,”—

“Carries her insignificance of spirit so far as to refuse, at her father’s command, a man she ought to have jumped high as the moon to accept!”

“Margaret? — Margaret Barnsley? — why whom in the world has she ever known intimately enough to refuse?”

“If I tell you, you will never forgive *her*, nor my father *me*.”

“You cannot mean *Edward*?”—exclaimed Helen, becoming gradually enlightened, “No! —Margaret cannot have refused Edward Sullivan!”

“With very little ceremony, I assure you! While you and my mother were at St. Leo-

nard's, he was always at Stokeshill; and at length felt so sure of her, as to persuade my father to write proposals."

"If Edward felt sure, he deserved to be refused," said Helen firmly. "On the whole, too, Margaret decided wisely. In obtaining the influence of a young and pretty wife over Edward's timid nature, she might have dragged him down to her own level. She is a dear good girl; but not the person to draw out the retiring disposition of Edward. I am glad she refused him."

"If my father could but hear you! My father cannot even forgive Ned for having betrayed him into the proposal. My father, who found Barnsley a useful country neighbour but never could bear him as a man, no longer mentions his name without foaming at the mouth. He is afraid Barnsley will fancy his alliance was courted as a matter of interest—afraid he will fancy his refusal has been a source of mortification to us. I really

think my father would go all lengths to annoy him."

"Do not say so;—remember in how unhandsome a light you are placing my father!"

"Remember rather, what a position we occupy in the county compared with that fellow, Barnsley! Now that the Woodgates are gone, Sullivan of Hawkhurst is the most ancient landed proprietor in this part of Kent. These people at Wynnex would give their coronet to possess such a pedigree. Even Lord Walmer is only of Elizabeth's time."

"But, after all, what is pedigree?" cried Helen. "Did it prevent Sir Richard Woodgate from having an execution on his property?"

"I only wish it had prevented his selling Stokeshill till my uncle's death placed me in a position to make the purchase," answered her brother. "There is no end to the mischief of having such people as the Barnsleys introduced into a respectable neighbourhood."

See,—only in the second generation, it has all but produced an alliance between us and them! If one could but get Barnsley to sell the place, with a little help from my father, I might compass it, and get rid of my cursed Irish property.”

“Compass it rather by marrying my pretty, docile friend,” cried Helen, jokingly; “and *then* you might keep both.”

“Marry that fellow, Barnsley’s daughter? Thank you! The proverb says that *beau sang ne ment jamais*;—but base blood is equally a truth-teller. The girl is just bearable now, under the extenuating circumstances of youth and prettiness: but rely upon it the cloven foot will one day start out. As a married woman, she will grow mean and vulgar;—the pettifogging spirit will betray itself.”

“Well! do not marry one of the Drewes, and I will let you off from marrying Margaret,” said his sister with a smile.

“I have no thoughts of marrying any one

at present," replied Mr. Brereton, consequentially. "I saw a good deal of the Drewes last winter at Paris, and last spring in town. There was the connecting link of country-neighbourship to draw us together ; and Shoreham and I, you know, belong to the same clubs."

" Rely upon it Lady Shoreham supposes you to be paying your addresses to her daughter."

" So have many women, and found out too late that they were mistaken ! If a man of family like myself,—independent—having property, happens to dance twice with a girl, the family insist that he is paying her his addresses ; while, after a younger brother like poor Ned, has actually proposed, they persist in never having seen or understood a word of the matter ! But by Jove ! here is that fellow Barnsley making his way towards us."

" Come into the ball-room ;" said Helen, rising. " I am quite cool and rested now."

" I can't make out Barnsley," continued

Brereton, as they bent their way together out of the library to avoid him. “For the last fortnight, he has been pumping me about my intention of standing for Westerton. Why the deuce should he fancy *I* wanted to stand for Westerton?—Are there no boroughs to be had in England or Ireland, but Westerton? The brute is so *borné*!—Parliament is his monomania,—just as the peerage is that of your one-idead ass of an admirer, George Holloway.”

“Hush!” interrupted his sister; “they are both within hearing.”

CHAPTER XII.

Thou, like the hindmost chariot wheels art carst,
Still to be near, but ne'er to reach the first !

DRYDEN.

AFTER all the varying emotions of that day of days, Barnsley began to feel that (pending the anticipated day of his return for the ancient and loyal borough of Westerton,) it was the proudest of his life. The young Lord of Wynnex Abbey had opened the ball with his daughter, and the whole county applauded his choice ; but even that satisfaction was now obliterated. In the very teeth of old Sullivan,

the Earl of Walmer had presented him as his friend Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill, to Lord Henry Marston, as they all stood together talking Poor-laws with Lord Tynemouth. Lord Walmer had expressed himself anxious for Barnsley's opinion on the Dovor rail-road, ere he made an investment; while Lord Henry was no less eager to consult him concerning the dieting of the Westerton House of Industry, one of the pattern poor-houses of the county. Was it wonderful that under such flattering circumstances, he should remain unobservant of Margaret's escape from the ball-room, or oblivious of her morning's head-ache?

Old Holloway too, on the eve of his Salopian journey, had a thousand duties to charge upon the back of his brother magistrate. There were poachers to be recommended to the utmost rigour of the law; and an old half-doting woman, once a servant in the family, to be let off easy for stealing turnips in a field. As the sapient George was included

in the family caravan, the Squire even requested his faithful coadjutor to look in at Withamstead in the course of his morning rides, at some new drains in progress near the house;—and added a hint of the laziness of the fellows employed in re-tiling the gardener's house, who, having been recommended by Barnsley for the job, his interference seemed to be a mere matter of justice.

Even Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, one of the pests of Barnsley's existence, contributed on this occasion to his satisfaction. Punching him in the side just as Holloway relinquished his button, the wag of Westerton whispered jocosely :

“ Why is Miss Margaret Barnsley likely to become a woman of letters?—Do you give it up?—Because she's going to Win X.”

“ Psha! you are really too bad,” replied Barnsley, vexed to perceive that Closeman's apostrophe had been overheard by a very tall, sallow, haughty-looking young man, who had

sat by Miss Sullivan during dinner and held her in animated conversation at other moments of the evening.

“ Pray, who is that tall gentleman ? ”—inquired Barnsley of the Westerton banker, as the lofty stranger passed on with a sneer.

“ Don’t you really know ? ”—

“ If I did, why should I ask you ? ”

“ Well, then, between ourselves,—if you won’t mention it to any body—he is the Board of longitude.”

“ Closeman, you are really too bad ! ”

“ I ask your pardon—I meant the Dungeness light-house.”

“ Now, my dear Closeman ! ”

“ Joke for joke, my dear fellow !—You ask me whom he is, when I saw your own daughter go in with him to-day to dinner, cheek by jowl, as familiarly as the Siamese twins.”

The eyes of Barnsley still pursued the retreating stranger ; for he now noticed with

surprise, that every Westertonian head bent down reverentially in salutation as he passed. Dobbs ducked, while Mrs. Holdfast curtsied with never-ending iteration, like the bobbing lady at the wax-work. Here and there, the stranger paused condescendingly with inquiries after catarrhs, rheumatisms, puppy-dogs, and parrots; and to Mrs. Dobbs, who with her face resplendent with smiles awaited his approach, his address was of more than royal affability. Barnsley was completely puzzled! He knew every soul in the neighbourhood; nay, from its narrow limitation, found himself acquainted with the very acquaintanceships of the Dobbsses and Squillses. It was part of his vocation to know and play upon the stops of Westerton; to be aware that Mr. Dobbs had an extensive cousinship among the dissenters, and that Mrs. Squills rejoiced in relations well to do in the West-India connection;—the interests of his election demanded this vast diffusion of knowledge.

But of the haughty stranger, the object of the jocose Closeman's bad jokes,—at which his electioneering interests also compelled him to get up a laugh—he knew no more than of his own grandfather. Lord Henry had a word for the young man as he went by; Lord Walmer one of those courtier-like bows, redolent of the Chesterfieldian odour of aristocratic sanctity now all but evaporated from the face of the land; and, above all, old Sullivan, the formal Sullivan, stiff as a baronial effigy on a tomb in Westminster Abbey, relaxed from his rigidity, and with a stony smile perpetrated something almost amounting to a jest with the illustrious stranger.

“ I think you dance the supper dances with Mary?—Supper will be announced in half an hour,” said Lady Shoreham, hurrying at that moment towards Sullivan and the great unknown. “ You will find my daughter with Lady Walmer, near the orchestra.”

And away she went again—leaving no time

for Barnsley's intended interrogations. But his curiosity was now excited to the utmost, and seizing the sleeve of Dobbs, he would fain for once have placed the lawyer's information under contribution ; while Dobbs, who having heard their lady hostess' announcement respecting supper, was impelled towards the dining-room by a forty horse power of gluttony, exclaimed to Barnsley as he pushed on : " By and bye, my dear Sir, I am at your service. At present, I am engaged to take in Mrs. Closeman to supper."

Poor Barnsley !—The God of knowledge seemed, like Coleridge's God of Love, to clap his wings upon the shore, mocking the esquire of Stokeshill as he sailed onwards on the stream of time ; and as the black knight had now disappeared with the current of human heads pouring out of the ball room towards the savoury hall, he had no longer the means of pointing out the object of his curiosity. He was desperate, as well as defeated ; for by

one of those intuitive warnings that often occur in novels and occasionally in real life, he felt by intuition like the fat nun Catherine on first beholding the fat monk Luther, that the master of his destinies was before him !

It suddenly occurred to him that if, as Closeman asserted, his daughter had been led in to dinner by the strange gentleman, she must be at least cognizant of his name ; and thus reminded of Margaret's existence, away he went in search of her. But neither in gallery, library, nor ball room, was Margaret to be heard of. Lady Shoreham was too busy marshalling her guests to supper to be interrupted ; but Mr. Squills, who entertained a professional interest in the subject, informed him that, having noticed Miss Barnsley looking extremely pale and indisposed, he had recommended her to retire to rest.

As soon as the despatch of supper would allow, Barnsley, accordingly proceeded, for the second time that day or for the last half

dozen years, to Margaret's bed-side, waking her from a heavy sleep which not all the tumult of the house could interrupt, to inquire,—“How are you now, my dear?—Pray, what is the name of the gentleman with whom you went in to dinner?”—

“I—I, believe I am better,” faltered poor Margaret, pressing her hand to her forehead. “The gentleman's name, papa?—I cannot tell you. He gave me his arm, because, I was going in alone. I never saw him but once before, for a moment, in the library here.”

“You know nothing of him, then?”—

“Nothing whatever. But I have some idea that he is a friend of the Sullivan's, and has been staying lately at Hawkhurst.”

“Indeed?—well, good night, my dear. You will be better to-morrow; try to get a good night's rest.” And closing the door into her dressing room as loudly as if to ascertain the solidity of the foundations of Wynnex Abbey, he went back to the scene of festivity; reaching

the great hall in time to see his perplexer wrapt in his cloak, stand bowing at the open door in reply to Mrs. Dobbs's offers of setting him down.

"Your carriage is open, Sir, and you are heated, with dancing," said the polite old lady. "We shall pass the Winchelsea arms. Pray, allow me the honour of putting you down."

But Barnsley's attention was instantly withdrawn from all idle conjectures. He was sent for, as usual, by Lady Shoreham whenever she was in a dilemma. There was confusion in the state of Denmark! The fire works were not the only source of explosion in honour of the young Lord's birthday. The discretion of the tenantry appeared overflowed by the spring tide of October that had set in;—after drinking, had come fighting,—and after fighting, the constables. Two of the most uproarious of his Lordship's health-drinkers were in the cage, and their victim in the infirmary; even the good order of the ball in the steward's

room had been interrupted by the unauthorized intrusion of Parson Drewe; who, after his third bottle of claret, had insisted upon drinking a glass of punch with Mrs. Timmins, of the Market Place, with an audacity of assiduity by which the complexion of her husband the brazier, was converted to the hue of one of his own copper saucepans !

“ Do, my dear Sir,” said the agitated Lady Shoreham, “ exert your usual kindness to get these unpleasant matters settled for me. I cannot persuade Shoreham to leave his rubber; and, even if I could, he knows nothing of the people here, and has at present no influence over them.”

It needed only a hint like this to carry Barnsley to the field of action; whence the parson and his gin punch had been removed to bed, and the belligerents to durance vile. He poured oil upon the billows of Mr. and Mrs. Timmins;—he shook his head with the constables, and hands with the steward;—end-

ing all with a charge to the subordinates in the court yard, peculiarly characteristic of the magisterial wisdom of Mr. Barnsley of Stokes-hill Place.

To Stokeshill Place, meanwhile, after explanations that set poor Lady Shoreham's mind at ease, Mr. Barnsley hastened his return. Having business to transact at the town hall of Westerton early on the following morning, he had ordered his carriage immediately after supper; but perplexed by a certain or uncertain number of glasses of iced champagne, and a red reflection on the sky caused by the beacons and bonfires still smouldering on the hills, he began to fear he had overstayed himself, and that morning was already breaking.

But no!—some hours of rest were still before him; and though his eyes smarted and his brows ached when he woke at Stokeshill on the morrow, sufficiently to excuse his careless replies to the questions concerning Margaret's

appearance and deportment, hazarded at breakfast by Miss Winston, he contrived to be on horseback betimes, and sniffing his way through the hop market at Westerton, by eleven of the clock.

The gleam of certain brazen skillets dangling before the door of a house in the market place, reminded Barnsley, as he passed the hardwareman's shop, that he had promised the night before to give Timmins a call of inquiry after his hysterical lady. Now Richard Timmins was a man by no means to be neglected; the crack orator of the True Blue Club,—the Mirabeau of the Westerton hustings, with logic as luminous as his plated candlesticks, and sonorous as his own brass warming pans. Timmins was weighing an ounce of ten-penny nails, when his respected customer from Stokeshill hurried in; but, with a knowing jerk of the thumb, he pointed to the back shop in which, on market days, Missus Timmins did the honours of her currant wine to all visitors of

repute. The handle of the glass door yielded to Barnsley's touch; and while with the other hand he removed his hat in deference to the hysterical hardware woman, he saw that Missus Timmins was not alone. Opposite to her in the arm-chair of honour, sat the memorable stranger of the Wynnex ball!—

What candidate on earth, but would have smelt a rival candidate, at such a moment, in such a place!—

“ Pray step in, Mr. Barnsley, Sir,” said the Timmins, pointing to a seat, with a very different air from that with which she was accustomed to receive him. “ Not fatigued, I hope, Sir?—Poor affair last night, in my opinion, to have been so much talked of!—I expected things in a tiptop style.”

“ I fear,” said Barnsley, good naturedly, “ that the impetuosity of Mr. Drewe may have left a disagreeable impression on your mind; but—”

“ Bless your 'eart, I was not thinking of

that!" said the lady mincingly; while her dignified visitor disguised a smile by fixing his eyes on two curs in the street snarling over a bone. "I was thinking, Sir, how different things was done at 'Awkust, when Mr. Sullivan as was, Mr. Brereton as is, came into his fortun'."

"I can assure you, Madam, that every thing was provided on the most liberal scale," observed Barnsley, rather nettled. "Fifty cases of champagne; and a hogshead of old port—"

"Bless your 'eart, I was not thinking of *that*!" cried the lady again, "not but what, betwixt friends, I must say, the 'ams at *our* supper was the worst I ever tasted!—But such a sad mixture, Sir!—My Lady, I s'pose, is above attending to them things, or had enough to do with her own company; and what was the consequence?—we really had folks in the steward's room, as was no how fit for our society!—Things can't go on well, Mr. Barns-

ley, wneere there's no distinction of classes. For my part, I can't abide low company. At Mrs. Sullivan's, Sir, orders was gin' that no one was to be admitted to the steward's table, but such of the old tradesmen of the family as kept their chay, and had things a little genteel. The *hoy polloy*, as Mr. T. calls 'em, was with the livery sarvants in the hall. But last night, who should I see the first person stuck up next to Mrs. Tomlinson, the housekeeper, like who, but she—but Mrs. Trollope, as keeps an oil and pickle shop in Shoe Lane; whose husband was fut-boy, at the Vicarage, no such great times ago;—a person belonging to a class as Mr. T. and I is not in the habit of demeaning ourselves to sociate with."

"I am convinced Lady Shoreham would be greatly concerned did she imagine, Ma'am, that your feelings had been hurt by any thing occurring under her roof," said Barnsley gravely.

"Why you see, Mr. Barnsley, Sir, as I've just been remarking to Sir 'Enry, here, the

neighbourhood ben't by no means what it was. I've heard my mother say, she remembered the time when, except Canterbury and Maidston', there warn't a genteeler town than Westerton in the county of Kent; thirteen livery footmen, in the gallery, at church of a Sunday; and reg'lar routs and card parties all winter long. And now, Sir, what becomes of them widder ladies and single ladies, as used to settle here?—why they sets up at Brighton, or Hastings!—While, as to the families roundabouts, saving and excepting one or two old 'uns, such as the Sullivans of 'Awkust—"

But poor Barnsley was spared an harangue such as scarcely even electioneering patience could have supported; his name being loudly called on from the shop, by his friend Closeman, who at length thrust his head into the fusty boudoir of the dainty Mrs. Timmins.

"Why Barnsley!—what are you about?—Out of the frying pan into the fire, eh?—and a fire with such a deuced number of irons in it, eh?

—Come, come, we've been waiting for you these ten minutes at the town hall."

And dragging Barnsley through the shop, without giving him time for so much as a last glance at the perplexing Sir Henry, he was soon Kentishly deep in the jargon of the hop-pocket, with the growers who stood wrangling together in the market place.

The business to be dispatched at the town hall, which regarded a defaulter in a branch of the turnpike trust, was productive, like most similar discussions in a squirearchal synod, of much heat, much irritation, much recrimination, and as little rational purpose as can be conveniently imagined. After talking for four hours, and acting at last as if they had not talked for one, Barnsley found himself at liberty to remount his favourite mare, ride off to Withamstead, and consult old Holloway, who was to depart for the metropolis on the morrow, concerning some point of legal etiquette relative to the guar-

dianship affairs at Wynnex ; but it was six o'clock before he entered once more the lodges of his own particular domain. He had declined dining at the Abbey under the equivocal aspect of Lord Shoreham's conduct ; and it was not till the following day that the Stokeshill carriage was to be sent to bring home Margaret.

Great, therefore, was Barnsley's surprise, on entering the stable yard, where it was his practice to alight when unaccompanied, to see a servant in the Drewe livery, and a smoking hack which he recognized as belonging to the Abbey. As he gave his horse to the groom, a letter was placed in his hands ; which, having hastily opened, he perused on his way into the house.

Wynnex Abbey,
Thursday.

“ Dear Sir,

“ I am under the painful necessity of request-

ing that you will hasten hither as soon as possible. Miss Barnsley having passed a very restless night, I thought it right she should see Squills this morning, who is in daily attendance at the Abbey. He owned to me, at once, that there was a tendency to sore throat which he thought alarming; and this afternoon, does not hesitate to affirm, that my young friend's illness is scarlet fever, and I fear of a malignant kind. The dear girl is in a high fever, and can scarcely speak to be intelligible.

“ Under these circumstances, my dear Sir, Miss Barnsley's nearest relative being at hand to watch over her welfare, I consider it my duty to my own family to remove my daughters without delay out of the reach of infection; and my brother and nieces are setting off with us for Ramsgate, where we shall sleep to-night. Shoreham, who has had the scarlet fever, remains with his uncles at the Abbey; but they will offer no disturbance to the

dear invalid, and I trust you will bring Miss Winsley, and contrive to make your daughter as comfortable at Wynnex till her recovery, as in your own commodious mansion.

Pray let me have a line from you to-morrow, addressed to the Royal Hotel, Ramsgate, and believe me ever, dear Sir,

Most faithfully, your obliged,

L. SHOREHAM."

For a moment, Barnsley stood aghast. The thought of Margaret, in danger and already abandoned at Wynnex Abbey, touched even his callous heart. She might die,—his child,—his sole heiress;—she, for whose sake he had been amassing riches, and storing up his personal consideration; she whom, but the night before, his busy fancy had already saluted Lady Viscountess Shoreham! He thought less of the docile child—the mild companion—than of the inheritress of Stokeshill and its honours.

Miss Winston was instantly summoned, and desired to hurry her preparations during the time the carriage was getting ready ; while Barnsley, who in the midst of his parental woes could not forget that he had eaten nothing, and talked much since an early breakfast, sat down to his cod and oyster sauce, calling for Chili vinegar and Harvey, as if his mind were perfectly at ease.

The poor governess, loving her pupil as much as it was in her nature to love, was speechless, meanwhile, with anxiety ! During her whole attendance on Margaret, scarcely a day's indisposition had intervened ; and her terrors rose in proportion to the novelty of the case. She was ready for departure long before the coachman, and very long before Barnsley ; who, once in process of restoring exhausted nature, did not seem inclined to abridge himself of his slice of pheasant, his angle of apple pie, or even a dig of Stilton. To watch him emptying his last

glass of port, and leisurely picking his teeth, no one would have supposed that the carriage was at the door to convey him to a dying daughter.

In the course of their drive from Stokeshill to the Abbey, Barnsley replied without reserve to the interrogations of the poor terrified governess, concerning the commencement and progress of Margaret's illness. He even avowed, in the excitement of the moment, the speculations to which the evident admiration of Lord Shoreham had given rise; and under the cheering influence of his glass or two of port, admitted a hope that the Viscount's pertinacity in remaining at the Abbey during her illness, might betoken favourably for the realization of his projects.

But this conjecture was lost on Miss Winston; she seemed to assign as little importance to Barnsley's matrimonial scheme, as if she had been hid behind the curtain when Lord Shoreham received from his mother the first

intelligence that Margaret was attacked with the scarlet fever.

“ Well,—send her home, then,—it is no great distance to Stokeshill!” was his reply; chalking his cue, without interrupting his game of billiards.

“ Miss Barnsley is much too ill to be moved.”

“ The devil she is!” cried his Lordship, attempting a canon.

“ So, after making your house his own for the last ten years, the attorney is going to convert it into his family hospital!” sneered Augustus Drewe, who was officiating as marker.

“ Well, never mind!—The girl *might* have had the small pox,” resumed Lord Shoreham. “ I’ve had the scarlet fever—I don’t care for the scarlet fever!”

“ But you surely will not think of remaining at the Abbey?” interrupted his mother. “ We are all off immediately for Ramsgate.”

“ I detest Ramsgate !—The air is so deuced keen that I once ate a brood of chickens for breakfast !”—observed Gus, in a low tone, as if talking to himself.

“ Of course, you will accompany us ?” observed the Viscountess, addressing her son.

“ Not I, indeed !—I have promised myself and my uncles a fortnight’s shooting at Wynnex. I would not stir an inch, if the plague were in the house.”

“ And so it is !” murmured the honourable marker.

“ But your sisters and I will be alone ?” resumed Lady Shoreham.

“ Take Brereton then ;—I make you a present of Brereton. Brereton is too good a shot, for me to wish to keep him at Wynnex. We shall get through our dummy whist very well without him. Take Brereton !”

Lady Shoreham saw that all she had to do was to submit. Seriously alarmed for her

daughters, her chief desire was to get them out of the house. She had not even leisure for remonstrance.

“ Good bye, mother,—good bye, Flora,—good bye, girls!”—said Lord Shoreham, as they re-appeared in their shawls and bonnets, on the eve of departure. “ Amuse yourselves at Ramsgate; and recommend Miss Margery Barnsley to get well as soon as convenient. I have got all Crockford’s coming down to me for the first day’s hunting; and it would hardly be decorous to honour a young lady’s wake with a view-halloo!—I should strongly recommend her to cut the apothecary and her stick without delay.—Gus! mark fifteen!”

CHAPTER XIII.

She weeps not for the wedding day
Which might have been to-morrow ;
Her's was a further-looking hope
And her's a mother's sorrow.

WORDSWORTH.

IN process of press, the County Chronicle announced in two flaming columns the particulars of the Wynnex fête,—from the number of guns and rockets discharged in the park, to the number of marabout feathers in Mrs. Dobbs's bonnet. Stereotyped phrases inseparable from such occasions, of “ diamonds whose lustre was only to be surpassed by the

eyes of the lovely wearer," and indefatigable dancers, "tripping it on the light fantastic toe, till the rosy morn," &c. &c., were duly read and laughed at, from one end of the county to the other,—from Deal to Dartford.

One paragraph, however, connected with the recital, was considered no laughing matter. When the county of Kent saw it written down in malice, that the "ball was opened by the young and noble proprietor of Wynnex and the only daughter of his worthy guardian, the lovely heiress of Stokeshill Place," it felt half prepared for the plausible announcement that appeared on the morrow, of—"We learn that a matrimonial alliance is on the *tapis* between the Right Hon. Viscount S——, and the lovely and accomplished Miss B——,"—a mystery cavalierly expounded by the London evening papers into — "Lord Shoreham is about to receive the hand of Miss Barnsley, a Kentish heiress."

This they took seriously enough. The Wal-

mers, Marstons, and Fitzgeralds, shook their heads, and thought it a pity the young man had not formed a better connection; while the subordinate coteries, more envious of Margaret and her father than careful to preserve his Lordship's purity of caste, entered into further particulars. Some thought Barnsley's conduct scandalous; others, who had been warned off the premises of Wynnex for poaching, had always guessed what the fellow was at; while one called him an upstart,—a second a humbug, and a third (the third cousin of a Welsh Baronet) whispered that she had been credibly informed Mr. Barnsley's sister was married to a "wholesale linen-draper in Fleet-street." Poor Barnsley, in short, was that day more roughly canvassed in the county, than he had been during the whole twenty years of his residence at Stokeshill.

But, after all this heat and excitement,

The third day came a frost—a chilling frost,

Three days after the Wynnex celebration, there appeared—

“We regret extremely to state that the festivities consequent upon Viscount Shoreham’s attainment of his majority, have been interrupted by the appearance of malignant scarlet fever at Wynnex Abbey; and that the daughter of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill, one of the brightest ornaments of the recent gala, lies there without hope of recovery.”

Here was oil for the waves! Here was an appeal to the sympathies of a soft-hearted public! Young, rich, beautiful, on the eve of marriage with a charming young nobleman,—*who* could withhold their pity from the gentle Margaret!

From Westerton, where she was known and liked, to Canterbury and Maidstone, where she was only guessed about, everybody had a “poor thing!” to bestow upon the dying girl. The serious moralized,—the gay grew serious. Not a guest of the Wynnex ball, but had noticed

and admired the sweet partner of the young hero of the day ; but one and all now discovered that they had never before been *so* struck, *so* fascinated ;—that they had discerned something angelic in the soft humility of her air ;—that she bore the impress of peculiar interest said to be attached to those predestined to an early death. Poor Margaret was the idol of the whole county. Had Sir Edward Knatchbull or one of his coadjutors been gathered just then to his forefathers, the name of Barnsley might almost have offered itself in succession for the representation of Kent !

The County Chronicle, meanwhile, as if conscious of the interest it had created, kept up the sensibilities of its subscribers by further paragraphs.

“ Viscountess Shoreham and the Hon. Misses Drewes, with the Earl of Tynemouth and his daughters, arrived on Friday night at the Royal Hotel, Ramsgate. The young Viscount remains at Wynnex Abbey, with the

family of his intended bride, in unremitting attendance on this lovely and unfortunate young lady."

The day following, the lovely and unfortunate young lady was announced (though still in imminent danger) to be "slightly amended."

But this announcement was only one among a thousand inventions to which the unlucky illness of poor Margaret gave rise. She was not even "slightly amended." Both Squills and the London physician, sent for at his request, pronounced her condition to be hopeless. Barnsley stationed himself, from morning till night, in an adjoining room, forgetting that there existed such a thing in the civilized world as a Stock Exchange, a court of law, or a hop market; while poor Miss Winston contrived to move like an automaton in the discharge of her attendance on the sick chamber,—her faculties thoroughly overpowered by the heaviness of her affliction.

Margaret lay insensible to the sudden sym-

pathies she had excited,—unconscious that all Kent sorrowed for her,—for *her* the obscure, unseen, unknown, Margaret Barnsley; — or that the father to whom she had instinctively devoted the fervour of her innate filial piety, was repaying it with a tardy tribute of tenderness.

What momentous lessons had she not been fated to acquire during her short visit to Wynnex! First,—that the love which had induced Edward Sullivan to amble in the green lanes by her side, was a passion by which hearts are broken, and to which lives are sacrificed:—next, that a man may be rich, intelligent, virtuous, yet a mark of contempt for certain orders of society;—lastly, that at seventeen, in the prime of youth and enjoyment, a christian soul may be summoned to render up its account to the judgment seat of God!

It was this last consciousness that sat heavy upon her gradually-awakening faculties, when, after many days of insensibility, she became

once more sensitive to pain, and accessible to reflection. It was only on a restoration to life that she felt herself to be dying ; her first perceptions being excited by the sight of two female figures standing within her darkened curtains, one of whom whispered in firm but silvery accents to the other, that all was not yet hopeless.

“ No human being can appreciate what I should have to suffer under such a bereavement ! ” faltered, in reply, the softened voice of the governess. “ In earlier years, I loved nothing but her mother,—and she grew up only to be taken from me ! Since then, I have devoted every moment of my life to the child she left behind ; and, behold ! she, too, is going,—and I shall be alone.”

To such an apostrophe, even Helen Sullivan had nothing to reply ! But Margaret, deeply penetrated by the affection of which she had been unconsciously the object, found strength to extend her burning hand towards the

withered and trembling one resting upon her pillow, and drawing it towards her lips, imprinted a kiss of gratitude which thrilled through the frame of the poor governess, as though bestowed by one uprising from the tomb.

“She is sensible!—my child is saved!” faltered the good woman, bending her knees beside the bed, with words of fervent thanksgiving.

“Do not agitate her!” said Helen, surprised to find herself repressing emotions which, for the first time for fifty years, were breaking bounds. “Compose yourself, my dear Madam. Margaret, do you feel better?—Are you in pain?—are you thirsty?”

And it was a welcome task to Helen to bear to Barnsley the tidings of his daughter’s amendment, ere she hurried back to Mrs. Sullivan, who was waiting in the carriage at the gate.

But Margaret, though amending, was still in a precarious state. A change of weather,—an accession of feeling,—might shake the leaves

from the frail and delicate flower, and strew them withering upon the earth.

Miss Winston sat by the bed side, with her eyes strained to watch through the dim and uncertain light, every change upon the countenance of her nursling. Unaccustomed to exercise her imagination, she now began to ponder in the watches and darkness of the night, upon the mysterious fortunes of "Mary," and Mary's daughter. She had not been present at the death-bed of Mrs. Barnsley ; but fancied that just as Margaret appeared inanimate before her, her mother must have looked in death. The resemblance between the two was, at all times, striking. Were their fortunes, alas ! to prove thus sadly similar !—

Meanwhile, whenever Margaret was able to pronounce a few articulate words, she tried to make them words of comfort to the disconsolate woman attending upon her ; and at the close of nine days' incessant watching all went well. Miss Winston was enabled to say

“ God be thanked !” and Barnsley to observe, —“ To-morrow, I shall be able to ride over to Stokeshill. Every thing there must be at sixes and sevens” for Margaret was pronounced to have surmounted the crisis of her disorder.

But with the sweets of that happy turn of events, came bitterness to Barnsley. Even the blindest of men of business, (next to lovers the blindest of the human race,) must have perceived that, since the commencement of her illness, his hopes and the County Chronicle had been deceived; and that the young Viscount had no more thoughts of “ leading her to the hymeneal altar,” than of marrying his dairy-maid. Instead of “ a matrimonial alliance on the *tapis*,” the only *tapis* just then claiming Lord Shoreham’s attention, was that of his new billiard table.

But it was not even *this* conviction that added such strange contraction to the brows of Barnsley, as he sat by the fire-side of his daughter’s dressing room, on returning to the

Abbey after dining at Stokeshill on the first day of her convalescence.

A letter, lying on his desk at home from old Holloway, had acquainted him that, in consequence of an understanding with ministers, his new peerage would be gazetted on the Saturday ensuing, and a new writ taken out for the borough of Westerton.

In pursuance of this hint, Barnsley had stopped at the door of his friend Dobbs on his way back to Wynnex ; and found, actually issuing from its brass-plated portal, his enemy Giles Hawkins of Longlands Farm, accompanied by no less a personage than the mysterious "Sir Henry," who, for the last week, had suffered an eclipse in his mind.

"You have had one of my Stokeshill neighbours with you, I perceive," said Barnsley, trying to address Dobbs junior in a cheerful voice, as he entered ; "and at ex-official hours, too. Nothing has happened at Longlands to bring him here so late?"—

“ I might almost reciprocate the question with regard to Wynnex Abbey ? ” — replied Dobbs junior, facetiously. “ But Miss Barnsley, I am happy to find, is recovering ? ”

“ Much better, thank you.”

“ With respect to Sir Henry Woodgate,” continued Dobbs, in a more confidential tone, “ we have had him here, as you may suppose, at all hours, since our respected friend, Mr. Holloway’s elevation to the peerage transpired at Westerton.”

“ Woodgate ? — Why, what has Sir Henry Woodgate to do with Holloway ? ” —

“ With Holloway, nothing ; — with Westerton, much. His ancestors, as you well know, were among the earliest benefactors of the borough. Touty’s meadows, (the best thing belonging to the Grammar School) were originally conferred on the foundation by Sir Ranulph de Woodgate.”

“ Yes, yes, — I know — I am aware. But what signifies *that* to this young man ? — Does he want to recover them back again ? ”

“The thing will make a clap-trap for Dick Timmins on the hustings.”

“The hustings !—Timmins !”—cried Barnsley, aghast.

“The brazier will work *con amore*, on the present occasion. Timmins will be worth listening to. His wife, you know, Sir, was daughter to the favourite waiting-maid of the last Lady Woodgate.”

“Am I to understand,” said Barnsley, turning deathly pale, “that Sir Henry Woodgate is going to stand for Westerton, and to be proposed by Timmins, the brazier?”

“Proposed by his relation, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst, my dear Sir,” said Dobbs, setting him right; “or rather, I should say, put forward by his relation Mr. Sullivan, and proposed (for form’s sake) by his friend Lord Henry Marston. But all this cannot be news to *you*, Mr. Barnsley?”

“Contest the election with me !”—faltered Barnsley.

“ With *you*?—Why, my dear Sir, you surely do not mean to stand?” said Dobbs, incredulously. “ I was aware that such a project had been vaguely in your thoughts. But you never formally canvassed us, or——”

“ I had Holloway’s promise to give me timely warning,—I had not the slightest notion of an opposition,—I considered myself virtually secure.”

“ Ah! *virtually* secure!” said the lawyer, with a significant emphasis.

“ Do you mean, that you think my chance is now doubtful?”—

“ Do *you* mean that, if Sir Henry starts, you have any idea of asking for a poll?”

“ Not ask for a poll?—Not find courage to reap the harvest I have been sowing for the last twenty years at Westerton?”

“ My dear Sir!” resumed Dobbs, in a low voice, as if to expostulate mildly with the infatuation of a madman, “ I speak to you as a friend. You will have to contend against the

influence of one of the most ancient names in the county of Kent.”

“ And pray where was the influence of that ancient name, in the year 1796 ; when Richard Woodgate polled only 36, —and—”

“ Times and opinions are altered. The Woodgates were then living at Stokeshill, — their distresses and improvidence the theme of general reprobation ; but that which was resented as misconduct on the part of old Sir Ralph, is commiserated as the misfortune of his grandson.”

“ A young man of five and twenty,—an inexperienced boy !”

“ A young man, you must admit, of the most extraordinary promise.”

“ Admit ?—I know nothing whatever about him.”

“ Not in your individual character, perhaps, but as one of the public !—No young fellow, since Canning, has so distinguished himself at Eton and Oxford. Young Woodgate is one

of the first political economists of the day. That last article of his in the Quarterly——”

“It is all up with me!”—reiterated John Barnsley, in a tone of concentrated rage. “This is Sullivan’s doing!”

“And if it were, we must acknowledge that Mr. Sullivan’s conduct is only natural. The Woodgates and Sullivans have been neighbours and friends, with occasional inter-marriages of the families, for the last four centuries. The grandfather and father of this very rising young man, were Mr. Sullivan’s friends; and the young man himself, was educated and has been travelling in Greece with Mr. Sullivan Brereton. Sir Henry wishes to be in parliament—*ought* to be in parliament. What can be more reasonable than that he should turn his eyes to the county, from a high station in which he is banished only by the prodigality of his progenitors; and where the influence and associations of his name are still predominant?”—

“ You speak with warmth, Mr. Dobbs,” said Barnsley; suspecting, and with reason, that the young attorney was already primed for a speech on the hustings.

“ Why certainly, as being retained on the occasion by Sir Henry Woodgate.”—

“ *Retained?* Why surely, Sir, you must have felt yourself pledged to *me* ?”

“ Indeed my dear Sir, you never definitely prepared us to support your interests. We conceived that the return of Sir Henry Woodgate from abroad, must have overthrown the vague projects you were supposed to have been forming; more especially when we found Sir Henry’s cause supported by your intimate friends, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst and my Lord Shoreham, by whom he was first accompanied to our office.”

“ You have deceived me Sir!—Where is your father?” said Barnsley, in heroic dudgeon.

“ My father, Sir, is dining at Hawkhurst,

with the gentlemen of Sir Henry's committee. But, in reply to the observations that have fallen from you, suffer me to say, Mr. Barnsley, that, on receiving the application of Sir Henry Woodgate's friends, my father waited upon you personally at Wynnex Abbey, to sound your intentions; when, in consequence, we are to conclude of your daughter's indisposition, he was refused admittance to your presence. In short, the altered state of things, seemed to have your concurrence; and I fancy we have now so clenched it, that opposition would simply bring down mortification upon yourself."

"That remains to be proved!"—cried the now infuriated Barnsley. "Though I have been thrown over by my professional adversaries,—misled by the inertness of Holloway,—and—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Barnsley!—I speak from authority in stating that Mr. Holloway has been altogether taken by surprise by the pre-

cipitation with which at last his patent has been made out."

"I am willing to think so. Mr. Holloway is an honest man; I should be sorry to entertain a different opinion of my Lord Withamstead. But, at least, you will not deny that my cause has been undermined by the revengeful spirit of Mr. Sullivan?"—

"Sir Henry Woodgate has certainly been staying at Hawkhurst on and off for the last four weeks. But there was no mystery, nothing underhand in the case. Sir Henry, at the period of the Wynnex ball, resided openly here, at the Winchelsea Arms. You constantly met him, Sir. I myself more than once saw him in your company. My worthy friend, Mr. Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge informed me that he actually found you debating together in the back shop of Timmins the brazier; and that, by the deference of your manner towards young Woodgate, you seemed

to be supporting his canvass with Mrs. Timmins."

"I was not even aware of his name!"

"Oh! Mr. Barnsley!"

"I never even heard of Sir Richard Woodgate's decease!—What had *I* to do with the Woodgates?—What was the family to *me*, that I should go prying into their affairs and investigating their projects?—For the first ten years, after I purchased Stokeshill, with cash down on the nail and on liberal terms, my life was embittered by the sprouting of thorns, the germs of which they had sown to spring up and perplex me!—At length I got them under:—I subdued, if I did not root up the evil.—I made the people about me sensible that a living dog, was better than a dead lion; that I held in my hands the means of benefiting or crushing them. They came to consider me, at last, master of my own house; they suffered me to have the disposal of my

own property. The name of Woodgate ceased to be dinned from morning to night into my ears."

Dobbs gently pushed a chair towards Barnsley, who was still standing, and whom he had never before beheld in so explosive a mood. But Barnsley did not even notice the conciliatory movement.

"And having thus far succeeded, why was I to go in search of the people, and push my inquiries into the state of their views and finances?—They have been living in Flanders or Germany. How was I to suppose that a branch of the family was fostering up silently, in England, as if for the express purpose of gathering renown and strength to sting me home?—Mr. Sullivan's motives of enmity I perfectly understand. I presumed to consider his younger son, with a paltry thousand pounds per annum, a bad match for my girl, the heiress, first and last, to eight;—yes, Mr. Dobbs, to *eight* thousand a year. So little do

I resemble your friends, the Woodgates, that my ignoble blood has permitted me to improve the means which God had given me. My fortune has increased in my hands as fast as theirs diminished. And since this rash young man thinks to make his profit of the animosity between the Hawkhurst family and mine, you may tell him, from me, that did the intended contest reduce John Barnsley to the same penury which forced his own family to sell their over mortgaged property, he would hazard all on the trial.—Yes!—to the last stick on the estate !”

The twinkling eyes of Dobbs junior would have warned an orator less excited than Barnsley, that the promise of an expensive contest for the borough, was not a particularly appalling menace to its leading attorney.

“ You may tell him, that this election,—(a type of the times, Mr. Dobbs, a struggle between feudal influence and moral strength,—I mean the strength of *money*, Sir, the fruit of

commercial or professional industry,)—you may tell him, that this election will serve fully to establish me in that very station in the county, in which it was my happy fortune to supersede him.”

“ I will lay before Sir Henry Woodgate any statements with which you may be pleased professionally to entrust me,” said Dobbs, determined that not a syllable of Barnsley’s harangue should damp the rising ardour of the Hawkhurst committee ; but pray excuse me from repeating grievances. Such an office enters neither into my profession, nor my character. You are heated now, my dear Mr. Barnsley, and it would be superfluous to expose to you the interest that the tory party must naturally feel in strengthening the hands of government with a member in the full vigour of youthful talents, a man who has already given rise to such prodigious expectations, a man whose name carries with it the force of historical associations, a man——”

“ I understand your sneer, Sir !” interrupted Barnsley “ But had you given your attention, Mr. Richard Dobbs, as I have for the last twenty years, to the dispatch of parliamentary business, you would find that the times are past when oratorical talent afforded a sufficient pass-key into the House of Commons. The House has ceased to be a debating society. The extension of public interests necessitates a more active dispatch of business; while the diffusion of knowledge, the equalization of public instruction, renders what is called talent a drug in the market.”

“ I spoke of *genius*, Sir, rather than of *talent*,” smirked the pragmatical Mr. Dobbs ; “ and as a professional man myself, I may be permitted to remark that one man of genius is worth his weight in men of business, to a party so responsible as our own. We have pledged ourselves to so much, Mr. Barnsley, that it is only by dazzling the eyes of——”

“ I did not come here, Sir, to debate the

state of parties, with you!" cried Barnsley, enraged to hear a whipper-snapper of young Dobbs's age conjoin himself, by a collective pronoun, with the great authorities of the state. "I came to require your father's professional services in my election. He has pledged himself elsewhere; it is sufficient. I wish you good night."

"Perhaps, Sir, you will make an appointment with my father, to confer upon the matter?"—said Dobbs, following Barnsley, candle in hand, into the hall; under the apprehension that certain tin boxes bearing a painted inscription of John Barnsley Esq., Stokeshill Place, might find their way out of his office; and that, in snatching at the shadow of an election, he might lose the substance of a good client.

"No, Sir, I shall confer upon it elsewhere!" cried Barnsley; and having put aside the starveling footboy who rushed with one arm in his jacket to open the door, he made a majestic

exit out of the house, and entrance into his carriage. “To Wynnex Abbey!” was his almost mechanical instruction to the servants attending it.

The command sounded well to Dobbs junior, but hollowly to himself. Barnsley knew that his occupation at Wynnex was gone, and that he had a peremptory one elsewhere; but like many other excellent deskmen of business, the laird of Stokeshill was a bad man of council; not ready in expedients, not prompt in decision. It was not till he had rattled along the high street of Westerton, at that hour thronged with workmen whistling homewards from their day’s labour, and entered the level road leading across the bridge and water meadows up to the higher grounds adjoining Wynnex Abbey, that the muffled sound of the wheels on the fibrous soil, seemed to allow free scope to his meditations.

What was he about to do?—To lose a whole night, or rather to throw a whole night’s

action into the hands of his adversary!—The committee already formed at Hawkhurst, was about to assume its public posture. His own address might still forestal that of Sir Henry Woodgate. A fee to the Westerton printer might complete his own within an hour after day-break. The draught of the address he had carried for many months past, in his pocket book; and lo, he jerked the check string, and the coachman was bidden back to the town. In a few minutes, Barnsley was standing in the printing office of Westerton.

CHAPTER XIV.

Is it not pity that this goodly youth
Should lose his birthright by his father's fault;
And long hereafter say unto his child,
What my great grand-father and grand-sire got
My careless father fondly gave away?—
Ah! what a shame is this!—look on the youth
And let his manly face that promiseth
Successful fortune, melt your stubborn hearts.

SHAKSPEARE

BUT by the time Barnsley attained the point at which he has been already described, musing before his daughter's fire with his considering cap upon his head, he began to repent at leisure of all that he had said and

done in his haste. Besides offering a couple of guineas, in bribery to the corrector of the Westerton press, to produce a thousand addresses on the morrow before nine o'clock, he had hurriedly modified his address to meet the new position of affairs, while standing perplexed in the printer's office, listening to protestations of the difficulty of disencumbering their presses to throw off the precious document.

But this was not the worst!—Westerton, —like most semi-manufacturing towns, whose river hath mills and factories to manufacture quarrels as well as cotton-twist, cloth, calico, or paper—had the advantage of possessing in addition to Messrs. Dobbs, Dobbs junior, Snobbs and Co., whose cliency and brass plate were the largest in the town, a house of business, established thirty years later upon a very slight capital either of money or respectability, by two clever, dashing, thick-and-thin attorneys; ready to undertake any job that

presented itself, without examining the colour of their fingers after the business had passed through their hands. Among such people as the Walmers, Marstons, Sullivans, and Holloways, the county families, as they were called at Westerton in contradistinction to those of the town, there was small demand for the services of such people, and they were denounced as nuisances and a discredit to the place; especially immediately after having been the means of obtaining justice against these great monopolizers, for certain of the worms whose labours served to produce the silk brocade of which their gaudy robes were spun and woven. The attorney with the small brass plate did, in short, at high remuneration for the poor, all that Barnsley executed gratuitously for the rich; re-establishing dormant rights, and rectifying established abuses.

Such lawless individuals as these lawyers, had of course an indifferent reputation. After the "county families" had set their faces

against them, the small gentry and leading tradesmen made proof of their gentility by following the example of the Magnats. Wonderful tales were related of the misdoings of Messrs. Harpindon and Hill; how, having the disposal of the savings of certain small farmers and thrifty widows, they had dropped the amount into everlasting darkness through the yawning mouth of securities, in Van Dieman's Land or mines in South America, or the moon,—no matter which,—to the ruin and indignation of the layers up of those treasures, which lawyers and thieves are too apt to break through and steal. There was no end to the rumours of their malefactions; and it came to pass, that so vile were the epithets bestowed upon them in the polite conversation of the neighbourhood, that all who, after hearing them denounced as monsters in the human shape, took courage to come in contact with them, were amazed to find in Messrs. Harpindon and Hill, two well-mannered, intelligent men, seeing the abuses

of the world in a strong light, and attacking them in a straight-forward way. The individuals thus enlightened, began of course to surmise, that the rumours circulated against these interloping brethren by Dobbs, Dobbs jun. Snobbs and Co., might resemble the manœuvres of the swell mob, who cry out “stop thief!” while they are picking a pocket.

Meanwhile Barnsley, who was good lawyer enough to discover that Harpindon and Hill were even better, and who, on more than one private and public occasion had found them plucking him by the skirts, no sooner found war declared against him in the names of Woodgate, Sullivan, Dobbs and Snobbs, than he hastily made up his mind to transfer his custom to their rivals; and already, Harpindon and Hill had received instructions, which served to new point every pen in their office! They desired no better sport than to make war upon Messrs. Dobbs and Snobbs with the money men and ammunition of the proprietor

of Stokeshill Place ; and were delighted to find Barnsley, like all men in a passion, make a much louder declaration of hostilities than the occasion required. Nothing was easier than to aggravate this martial ardour : they managed to make their knight prick himself with his own lance, and fancy himself wounded by the enemy.

Few people are at the trouble of ascertaining under whose influence they move through life, or whether they are doing the will of others or their own. In these times of statistical demonstration, when even the number of newspaper readers in the kingdom is shewn by a table, it would be an excellent problem for some under secretary of an under secretary of state, wanting to document himself into notoriety, to set forth the moral influences which control various districts and parishes. The rural population would usually be found under the dominion of the clergy ; but the small towns would prove subjected to that of the attorneys.

In times of war, the priest and the warrior have the upper hand; but in the piping times of peace, the law allies itself to the church, to secure good order among the people, and the lion's portion of their spoil.

The influence of a thriving country attorney is, in fact, prodigious!—He is the holder of every man's secrets,—the comptroller of many men's property. The farmer deposits his hoard with him; the squire his animosities; and family disgraces, family afflictions, are shut up under padlock and key, in those Pandora's boxes, the tin cases of his office. He might publish a tariff of the consciences of the district; and estimate to a pennyweight the principles, political or moral, of a whole population of clients! The lawyer's confessional is, in fact, one of wider avowal than the priest's; for the client who refrains from telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, may lose his cause; while the penitent reserves a portion of his crimes, trusting to some saving

grace to facilitate a future confession. If there be truth in the dictum that “knowledge is power,” Harpenden and Hill were unquestionably great men ; for they knew all that *could* be known of the families in and near Westerton.

But no sooner did Barnsley escape to home and reflection, from the specious promises with which they had fed his hopes of revenge, than he began to feel that he had been precipitate ; that he had undertaken a prodigious effort, a prodigious expense,—with the certainty of provoking a thousand personal vexations, and fixing a great gulf betwixt the families of Sullivan and himself.—Hitherto, nothing had occurred between Hawkhurst and Stokeshill that might not be effaced and forgotten. But, in the heat of an election, branding irons would be made hot to impress an ineffaceable token of enmity between them.—Lord Shoreham, too, had evidently taken part with the friend of his friend Brereton, and was

adding his weight to the scale;—and whether Sir Henry Woodgate should obtain his seat or his defeat, the event of the contest must detach John Barnsley from the Holy Alliance, to cement which he had dedicated twenty years of his existence. Dear [as were his parliamentary projects, they chiefly regarded the consolidation of his dignity as one of the allied powers; and second thoughts suggested, that the choice of some other seat would have constituted him M.P. without so much offence to his neighbours.

The time, however, for second thoughts was over. Barnsley had overstepped their modesty, to plunge at once *in medias res*. He was *pledged* to come forward. His protestations were about to come flying all abroad on the wings of one thousand addresses, in two-line pica. Harpenden and Hill had pasted him to the wall:—it only remained to screw his own courage to the sticking place!—After such prodigious protestations, how could he dare with-

draw, with his new attorneys ready to circulate through the country, tidings of his shabby retraction; for Harpenden's brother, alas! was editor of the County Chronicle; and Hill, the intimate friend of Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, who would never cease from punching him in the ribs for the remainder of his days, with a query of "Why is the Arctic expedition like a friend who shall be nameless?—Do you give it up?—Because it showed us its Back, and couldn't find its way to the pole!"—No! it would be impossible to provoke the retaliations of such people as Harpenden and Hill! He had already placed in their hands a cheque for one thousand pounds on the Westerton bank, of which Closeman was the leading partner; had already instructed them to proceed with certain proposals, needless to particularize, to a certain carpet-manufacturer, who had lately got up in vestries, clubs, and other public meetings, a sort of patriotic opposition to brazier Timmins. As far as the bond of

common Toryism would permit, it was intended by Barnsley and his advisers to set up their cause as that of the people against the aristocracy,—the most plausible character to assign to the struggle between the Woodgates with their parchments, *versus* Barnsley with his stock receipts.

While these notions were revolving in his mind, with his feet resting on the fender, Barnsley, like all people who in winter build castles in the air, seemed to be building them in the fire. At length, he was interrupted by the mild voice of Miss Winston, who had quietly taken a seat by his side.

“Mr. Squills has been here, during your absence, Sir,” said she. “He considers Miss Barnsley *much* better this evening,”

“Thank God!”

“She has had many hours’ undisturbed rest. The sore throat is subsiding,—her pulse is—”

“ Yes, yes !—You did not say anything to him of what you were mentioning to me at breakfast ?”

“ About Margaret’s anxiety to be moved to Stokeshill ?—Yes, indeed, Sir. As you were not here, I made all the inquiries you desired ; and Mr. Squills assures me that the day after to-morrow (if the weather prove fine), there will be no difficulty in removing Miss Barnsley, well wrapt up, and carried down stairs in her cloak. He offered to come and assist in her removal, and accompany us in the carriage to Stokeshill.”

“ How vastly unlucky !”—was Barnsley’s ejaculation. “ But it will be easy to postpone it. I will thank you, Miss Winston, to say nothing on the subject to Margaret, or in the house.”

“ I fancy, Sir,” replied the governess, hesitatingly, “ that Mr. Squills himself apprized Lord Shoreham of the arrangement. I saw

him walking with my Lord and one of his uncles, on the lawn."

"Very officious on the part of Mr. Squills," observed Barnsley. "Who told him to say anything about the matter?"

"I suppose he thought it might be gratifying to his Lordship to learn that poor Margaret was out of danger."

"Rather say gratifying to get her out of the house," cried Barnsley, with bitterness. "But no matter!—Removal at present is out of the question. I am satisfied that removal would be death to my daughter."

"Mr. Squills is of opinion——"

"Mr. Squills knows nothing about the matter! Stokeshill is about to become a scene of uproar and confusion."

Miss Winston looked alarmed.

"Stokeshill, for the next fortnight, will be a most unfit residence for a person in a delicate state of health. I shall myself be prevented

giving you the least attention ; and, under all circumstances, Margaret cannot be better than where she is. Lady Shoreham writes me word that they go straight to Tynemouth Castle from Ramsgate, and will not be back here till after Christmas. In this remote wing, you are no restraint upon Lord Shoreham, nor Lord Shoreham upon you. I shall liberally remunerate the trouble of the servants ; and——”

“ But Margaret, Sir ;—poor Margaret is so extremely anxious to get home ! I never saw her impatient on any subject before ; but it is impossible to express her desire to get away from the Abbey.”

“ Merely the irritation of her disease—nothing in the world else !” replied the father. “ I am sure she is very comfortable here,” he continued looking round at the handsome furniture of the room. “ You have every thing you want ?”

“ Every thing, Sir ;—the housekeeper is extremely attentive.”

“ And now you have got old Mrs. Molyneux from Stokeshill to sit up, you can take a night’s rest. Margaret is fond of Mrs. Molyneux; and Squills considers her the best nurse in the country.”

“ I intend, Sir, to go to bed to-night. Now all anxiety is over, I shall be able to sleep. Mrs. Molyneux has already taken up her post. Have you any further orders for me, before I retire ?”

“ None.—I am for bed myself. I must be at Stokeshill by seven o’clock; and shall probably pass to-morrow at Westerton.”

After a glance into the sick room, to ascertain that the night lamp was trimmed, the barley water in its place, and due preparation made for Mrs. Molyneux’s green tea, the father and governess accordingly retired; leaving the formal old lady in her pinched cap and snow-white apron, to preside over the rest of Margaret.

But the rest of invalids who slumber by day,

is apt to be disturbed by night; and it is part of the charter of sick-nurses to keep their patients awake, by snoring or gossiping. Mrs. Molyneux belonged to the latter class of disturbers; and after having made up the fire at midnight, and smoothed the restless pillow of Miss Barnsley, she drew her arm-chair forward and began, in a low voice, to recapitulate all the village news of Stokeshill. Margaret was glad to listen: glad to escape from her own weary recollections. She was fond of Mrs. Molyneux,—who had officiated as her nurse, previous to the arrival of Miss Winston; and it was from *her* Margaret had then gathered such miraculous legends of the virtues and graces of the Woodgate family,—legends since repeated whenever Margaret stood to gossip for ten minutes in dame Molyneux's cottage.

“ Well, Miss Margaret, my dear, we have had strange doings at Stokeshill since you have been away,” said the old lady in an audible whisper.

“ Indeed,” said Margaret faintly. “ I thought the rejoicings at Wynnex had sufficed the whole neighbourhood.”

“ Oh ! I’m not speaking in the way of bon-fires or strong beer, or them sort of things. We have had Sir Henry up at the village.”

“ Sir Henry ?”

“ Sir Henry Woodgate, my dear. His grandfather, you know, died last year in foreign parts ;—and the young barrynet’s come to his title,—more’s the pity one can’t say to his estate.”

“ I shall be very much affronted, my good nurse if you give me that hint again,” said Margaret, playfully.

“ Lor’ bless you, my dear Miss Margaret, you know very well there’s nobody but just yourself we could bear to see at Stokesell in the room of them as should be there. But sartainly it was a sight to make our hearts glad (that is them what is of the old times and can remember the real family up at the Place,) to

see a fine grown gentleman coming among us, with a kind word for one, and a shake of the hand for t'other, reminding us as he was the little Harry what had just begun to canter his pony through the village when the family troubles came, and all was forced to be sold off."

" Sir Henry was born, then, before the Woodgate family left the Place?—Yes, I remember it was his rocking-horse was left in my nursery, and his little play-garden to which I succeeded."

" To be sure it war! I used often to tell you so, my dear, when I came to be with you. Sich a fine sperity boy as 'twas.—I've seen the men set Master Harry on the colts about the Place without saddle or bridle, when he was scarce more than three years old, and he'd a seat then as firm as a man grown. And such a noble heart of his own! Such a parting 'twixt him and his nurse what took him from a babby,

—old Mrs. Woods of Woods End, her as you sometimes calls on Miss, who's got such a breed of bantams."

"Yes—I remember,—an old friend of yours whom you used to take me to visit when a child; and who had always so much to say of the grandeur of the ladies of the Woodgate family; of Lady Woodgate's jewels when she went to court"—

"And well she might," interrupted the old lady, smoothing down her apron; "for good friends they'd been to her. For all the want they'd fallen into, nurse Wood's pension is reg'lar paid her by lawyer Dobbs as the quarter comes round; and scarce a Christmas, but some token, (a shawl or a bit of lace, or a something,) brought over by Mr. Henry from foreign parts when he came back'ards and for'ards from Eton school; ay! and sometimes a line in his'n or Miss Agnes's own writing,—and that was more than all!"

“ The villagers at Stokeshill must have been much gratified by his visit,”—said Margaret with a sigh, feeling how much might have occurred on such an occasion to mortify her father.

“ That you may well say, Miss !—Lor’ bless you, it war’nt sooner known that the fine young gemman what had rode through the Market Place asking his way to Farmer Hawkins’s at Longlands, was Sir Henry Woodgate, than the church bells was set a ringing, that had not rung afore for a Woodgate any time these twenty years ; and I warrant, there was’nt a house nor a hovel in the parish that didn’t send out young and old to get a look at the last of the old family !—Bless you, there was those as hadn’t been seen in the sunshine for many a year, made a shift to crawl out as he passed by. Old Alice Molyneux, my mother-in-law, (as was ninety-four last Lammas), and Isaac Digges, (as nobody knows the age on in the

parish, but I've heard Alice say he was a man grown when she was a bit of a lass), well Miss—there we all stood (for you may be sure I was among 'em, by good luck, I'd just come home from nursing young Mrs. Snooks up at Daisy Head); all the littl'uns with posies in their hands, and what was more, most of the old'uns with tears in their eyes; and when the crowd spied out Sir Henry a riding, side by side with Hawkins, along the Larch lane from the church-yard, bless you, there came of a sudden such a silence as you might have heard a pin drop—except here and there some child a whispering to its mother, was that the great Sir Ranulph de Woodgate?"

"Whose monument is in Stokeshill church?" added Margaret with a faint smile.

"Why, you see, any Woodgate at all at Stokesell was like one a coming from the dead; and so the poor innocents couldn't make it all out."

“ And is Sir Henry Woodgate a fine young man ?”—inquired Margaret, by way of gratifying her nurse.

“ Why as to handsome, my dear,

Handsome those

As handsome does,

as the saying is. Them as holds for handsome a ruddy open-featured youth, like Mr. Cyril Holloway the parson, or young lawyer Dobbs, or the like, mightn’t think so much of Sir Henry, who’s dark, and may be a little stern, like folks as is brought up with trouble about’em. But if a fine young man means one as couldn’t walk along the High street of Westerton without every’dividual turning round to ask his name, (certain sure as the stranger must be som’un with good blood in his veins),—then, never did you see a handsomer nor a nobler !—though to be sure there was a mist before my eyes as I looked at him that prevented my seeing over and above clear. So when he got right among

us, Miss, he stopped his horse and was about to say somethin' handsome, but bless you! before he could open his lips, such a hurrah!—you might have heard it from the Market Cross up to the Place! If the Squire hadn't been here a 'tending of you, Miss Margaret, I have my doubts whether he'd have found it quite agreeable."

" My father would have thought it only natural the people should rejoice to see the last descendant of a family to whom the village is so much indebted."

" I don't know that, Miss. Mrs. Hawkins always gives me to understand that her husband——"

" Never mind the Hawkins's; they are no well-wishers to my father. Tell me about Sir Henry."

" I don't wish no better, Miss Barnsley. So as I was saying, after he'd spoke a word to all of them as their names was known to him,—such as Mrs. Wood's married daughters—(his

foster-sisters he called 'em) and my husband's family (and when it came to my turn you may be sure I made him my best obedience), Farmer Hawkins he whispered to such as stood nearest, that Sir Henry was a going to the church to see was the family moniments kept in order; and so the people had too much judgment to follow 'em, but only kept bowing and curtsying and waving their hats as long as Sir Henry was in sight. So when they got to the church, Sir Henry gave five guineas for the ringers to the old clerk what held his horse for him to 'light,—(just three more Miss than the Squire gave for ringing when you was a-born); and in he walks, straight up to the chancel, with a grave, firm face. And Master Hawkins told afterwards to his wife, as he never saw such a fine look as the young man gave to the old tombs, and hatchments up above them, and the tilting lance, and gloves, and ragged banner what hangs over old Sir Ranulph de Woodgate's marble Sir Coficus!—

And when Sir Henry walked out of the church again, and stood to put his hat on a moment on the threshul', them as saw him told me he was as pale as the dead, and seemed grown older by years than when he went in. And there stood the old clerk what had buried his father and great grandfather, crying like a child at the church-yard stile."

" And did Sir Henry visit the Place ?"—demanded Margaret, in a faltering voice.

" No, Miss—no power on earth would get him there. Farmer Hawkins told him the Squire was from home and you was from home, and he would answer for it, none of you would take it amiss. But he answered that he hadn't quite courage for that ;—or words to that effect, and away he went."

" And whence did he come to Stokes-hill ?"

" From Hawkhurst, Miss. Didn't I tell you he was a-staying at his cousin Squire Sullivan's, at Hawkhurst, for the grand doings

at the Abbey? It seems he was at school or college or something of that, with the eldest young Mr. Sullivan, (what's changed his name for a fortin') and with my young Lord Shoreham, and so he came down among 'em of a visit."

"Is he gone again, Mrs. Molyneux?"

"Gone?—bless your heart, no!—He's been a-staying at the inn at Westerton, treated for all the world like a king's son."

"How very strange!" observed Margaret.

"Why you see, Miss Barnsley, atween ourselves, it is said that Sir Henry be a-going to be a parliament man, a'cause Squire Holloway be a-going to be a lord. Mrs. Hawkins was a-hinting to me a-Sunday a-coming out of church that her good man declared Sir Henry Woodgate be to come to be one of the greatest men in England, since the great Billy Pitt,—and that young as he be, he can talk for all the world like a print book."

"You do not mean," said Margaret, raising her head upon her hand, and sufficiently aware

of her father's projects to know what a mortification was likely to fall upon him,—“ that Sir Henry Woodgate is going to stand against my father for Westerton ?”

“ I don't know about his standing against your papa, Miss ; but I know he be going to stand for Westerton. As I came through Westerton here this morning, all the town was full of it.”

“ How unfortunate,” sighed Margaret.

“ I'm sure I knows none as has better right to be a parliament man !” said the nurse settling the pillows of the invalid and the affairs of the nation. “ And do you know, Miss, there was but two things talked about at Stokesell the day of the young gentleman's visit. First, that there hadn't been as much beer drawn at the Woodgate Arms put a whole month together, as there was that night a drinking of Sir Henry's health, and long life to the old family ; and next,—but may be you'll take it amiss if I tell you what next ?”—

“ No,” said Margaret faintly, fancying it was only her pride that was about to be wounded.

“ Well then, Miss, all the talk from high to low, was what a pretty match might be made up atween Sir Henry and yourself, and so to restore Stokesell to the lawful owner.”

“ Is not my father, then, the lawful owner ?”

“ Yes, as far as such a property can be bought ;—but you know the king in olden times bestowed the estate upon Sir Ranulph de Woodgate for his services to the crown, and it was the family’s by royal gift,—the family hadn’t no right to sell it. And so, you see, a marriage atween yourself and the young bar-rynet would set all straight. And who knows? I’m sure you’d make as nice a couple as ever stepped in shoe leather.”

“ If I get well again, you must contrive to make me Lady Woodgate then,” said Margaret, and apprehensive of hearing more on the sub-

ject than she might know how to answer, she expressed a desire to sleep.

“ I hope I han’t a-tired you ?”—said the good woman, drawing the curtains.—“ I thought, poor thing, you might be the better for a bit of chat ; but I shall never forgive myself if you’re any the worse for it to-morrow.”

“ Never fear,” replied the kind-hearted girl. “ I promise you to be better in the morning. Good night, I am going to have a refreshing sleep.” This promise poor Margaret verified by a night spent in snatches of painful dreams ; in which Sir Henry Woodgate with the tilting gloves and lance of his ancestor stood on the Westerton hustings opposed in single combat to her father. After which, she found herself at the altar of Stokes hill church, attired in bridal white and her hand clasped in that of the marble effigy of Sir Ranulph de Woodgate, which stood as a bridegroom by her side.

Singularly enough, some mysterious concatenation of ideas assigned to both figures the face and features of the uncomely knight who had fled from her presence in the Wynnex library, and lent her the protection of his arm into the Wynnex dining-room !

CHAPTER. XV.

I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upwards! ——
Methinks I should know you, and know this man,
Yet I am doubtful. ——

SHAKSPEARE.

THE following morning, before Margaret's heavy eyes were unclosed or Miss Winston up and in attendance, Barnsley, half opening the door of the sick room, ascertained from the tidy old nurse that all was going on well, ere he proceeded to the order of the day. If ever business could prove unwelcome to him, it was

now, when he had to fulfil in cold blood the hot vapourings of a moment of excitement.

And lo ! skirting the very suburbs of West-erton, the scaffold-palings of a half-finished house presented, placarded to his view, an ADDRESS, beginning with a flourishing A, and ending with the simple Y of plain “ John Barnsley,” at which his favourite mare pricked up her ears, as if conscious that it involved her future interests in life. No one was going by at that early hour, but a bricklayer’s lad with a hod upon his shoulder, and a squalid shirtless child who was looking up to the mortar-whitened though unwashed artificer, in admiration of the wholeness of his garments ; and Barnsley had half a mind to ascertain, with his own eyes, to what pitch of literary eloquence his indignation of the preceding night might have attained. But he wanted courage to learn the extent to which he had pledged himself ; and when, on advancing into town, he saw his manifesto confronted with a writing on the

wall of "WOODGATE FOR EVER!" and another ADDRESS, ending, (as Closeman would have said) "not Ysely, but too well," with the mute E of the haughty Sir Henry Woodgate, the right electioneering spirit entered into his soul; and he felt that he could not have promised too much, if his promises tended to place him at the head of the poll.

But what a miraculous transformation had Barnsley already undergone!—He who was accustomed to ride through Westerton at the busiest hours of the day, passing Mrs. Squills with her five green-spencered little girls, Mrs. Dobbs junior trudging to the circulating library with five dirty marble-covered volumes in her hand, or Mrs Timmins, standing in the doorway of the milliner's shop, like a standard advertisement of its fashions,—and pursue the even tenor of his way without recognition of either of the three goddesses, pre-engrossed by the price of stocks which he had just learned at the bank,

or the contract for certain out-buildings of one of the Wynnex farms, of which he had just approved the estimate ;—he, though the only females now stirring in the town were thrifty maids-of-all-work twirling their mops before its doors, went slow,—smiled courteously,—and bowed to every eye that he could catch. Nay, having encountered at the door of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, a cobbler of some notoriety in the town, carrying home in his leathern apron to Mr. Richard Dobbs a pair of pumps which had required refreshing after the Wynnex ball, he stopped and gave orders for two pair of shooting-shoes, in a tone of the mildest magnanimity.

On entering the office of his new cabinet ministers, the shuffling of the clerks' feet, as they rose to do honour to his first appearance on that stage, produced an agreeable impression on his ear. Barnsley loved an attorney's office, with its musty smell and busy hissing

or sputtering of pens, just as a Beckford venerates the tribune at Florence, or a Heber the library of the Vatican. And as he stood in that of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill with its curtains of green serge, its high leather stools, and wainscoting of deed boxes,—“his foot was on his native heath, and his name was Mc. Gregor!”

On a supplemental table in one corner of the room, he saw files of his own Addresses, and a clerk scuffling them into envelopes, with wafers and a wafer seal by his side, preparatory to their dispersion over the country;—about two hundred were already closed and addressed, bearing witness to the young man’s activity.

“Can I speak with Mr. Harpenden?” inquired Barnsley, of the head clerk.

“If you will do us the favour, Sir, to wait a few minutes in the parlour,” answered he, fixing his pen behind his ear, and ushering the member postulant into an inner room. “Mr.

Harpenden is rather tardy this morning. He was up to a late hour, I believe, Sir, with unexpected business."

"Yes yes!—I know.—Inform him Mr. Barnsley is here."

And, while the clerk shuffled away in obedience to the command, Barnsley addressed himself to a perusal of the Westerton Weekly paper, a copy of which lay, damp from the press, upon the table. He started,—he jumped up,—he sat down on the black window-seat to ascertain, in clearer daylight, that his eyes did not deceive him!—But no,—the type was clear as type could be, in which was set forth the "ADDRESS of SIR HENRY WOODGATE BART. TO THE WORTHY AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF WESTERTON !!!"—while of himself or his intentions,—not a word!—

Yet it was at the self-same office whence this flaming sword had issued to defend the hustings against his advances, that his own manifesto of the preceding night had been transmitted to du-

rable inscription!—The editor could not but have seen it; could not but have known his intention of coming forward.—It was clear that the Westerton paper had been bought over by his antagonist!—

Ere he refolded the treacherous journal, Mr. Harpenden bowed his way into the room, with a portentous face and grave aspect, to inform his new client, in the words of one of his old ones, that “Jem Spraggs, the carpet-weaver warn’t to be had at no money.”

“I have, however, taken an opportunity,” he added, “to sound the intentions of a most influential member of the corporation, whose definitive answer to my proposals will reach me this day at three o’clock. In the mean time, may I inquire, Sir, whether you are assured of the support of your late ward?”

“Of Lord Shoreham? I *ought* to be assured of it,” replied Barnsley. “But so many strange disappointments have occurred within the last eight days, that if my own daughter

had a vote, I should feel it necessary to canvass her."

"Let us clearly understand our position, then," resumed Harpenden. "Sir Henry Woodgate has the Hawkhurst interest. Lord Withamstead I find will remain neuter; and taking into consideration the votes you have secured, and those I think I can venture to promise, I do not hesitate to say that the Wynnex interest will cast the election. Your doubts, therefore, cannot be too immediately cleared up."

"My position with regard to that young man is so extremely delicate," — observed Barnsley.

"My dear Sir,—electioneering matters admit of no delicacy!" interrupted the attorney, settling his waistcoat. "Delicacy is wholly to be laid aside. Situated as you are with regard to my Lord Shoreham, no one can be intermediate between you. Sir Henry Woodgate it seems is his school-friend: *you* have

proved, I might almost say, a benefactor. I should recommend you not to lose a minute in pushing your claims upon him ; and it is most essential that I should learn his ultimatum when I see you here again at three."

And, after another hour of dry examination of lists, and inquiries into influence, Barnsley so far complied with the injunctions of his attorney, as to retrace his way towards Wynnex. He began to see, with Harpenden, that it was by Lord Shoreham he ought to be proposed. He, who for so many years had been directing the affairs of others and putting every thing in the county into its place, was as easily managed as a child the moment it came to the administration of affairs where his own self-consequence was at stake.

Arrived at the Abbey, he was informed that my lord had "just stepped into the village;" a phrase he should rather have expected to hear applied to the kitchen-maid,—for Lord Shoreham was no "stepper" unless when grouse

shooting on the Moors ; and hitherto, had not seemed to be aware of the existence of the village.—Conceiving that, like King Cophetua of old, the young Viscount might have yielded to the attractions of some Helen in a russet gown, Barnsley judged it advisable to follow ; and it was no hard matter to ascertain, on arriving there, that my lord and the gentlemen were up at the Rectory. With still increasing wonder, the eager candidate followed ; and though the almost imbecile state of Dr. Dodwell had for years excluded visitors from his house, Barnsley wanted no excuse for intruding upon one whom, in his administration of the estates of the Shoreham family, he had omitted no opportunity of obliging.

The entrance-gate of the Rectory was open ; nay, even the parlour door stood ajar, where the old gentleman in his flannel dressing gown and cotton nightcap, was accustomed to pass the year round with his speaking trumpet on the table beside him ; and beside the table, the chair

of his shrewish housekeeper, Mrs. Rumbell, who took care to monopolize this sole means of communication with her master. As Barnsley, unobserved, entered the room into which he found he had been scarcely a minute preceded by Lord Shoreham and his uncles, the housekeeper was trying to scream into the ear of the old rector, (amazed by such a succession of guests,) that he beheld "my lord,"—the only lord likely to enter there;—and his two quondam pupils, the Hon. Augustus and Alfred Drewe.

"Mr. Alfred—Mr. Augustus?"—faltered the old doctor, making a vain effort to rise, by means of the arms of his easy chair, and instantly sinking again. And with half unconscious gesture, he tried to ascertain whether he were in a state to receive such guests, by feeling on his head for his wig;—that awful buzz-wig under cover of which he had for years tried to impress upon the minds of his rakish pupils, some respect for his person and the

classics,—in hopes that their modern instances might do credit to the wise saws of his inculcation.

“ It is many years, young gentlemen, since we met ! ”—quavered the old doctor, addressing the Parson and Augustus, in his now squeaking treble.

“ Many years !—five and twenty, and no mistake, I fancy,” replied Alfred, in his usual robust tones. “ And how have you managed to make it out all this time, eh,—doctor ? ”—

“ The gentleman speaks to you, Sir,” said Mrs. Rumbell, perceiving that the Parson’s address was lost upon her master.

“ Sir ? ”—said the old man, putting up his trumpet to Augustus, fancying it was by him he had been addressed.

“ Mr. Drewe wishes to know, Sir, how you find yourself ? ”—shouted the housekeeper, giving her own interpretation of the slang text.

“ Thank ye—thank ye,—pretty well !—ugh

ugh ! ugh ! I may say pretty well,—I may say a trifle better than last winter ;—a hale man for my years ;—could do my duty as well ever, gentlemen, if they chose to let me.—But there are evil disposed people in this parish ; —Mrs. Rumbell here will tell you, gentlemen,—ugh ! ugh ! ugh !—that there are *very* evil disposed people in this parish.”

“ Your lungs, Doctor, seem tolerably good ?” observed Alfred Drewe, anxious to ascertain the odds upon his chance of translation to a living, which the accession of his nephew to the Wynnex property now rendered a desirable residence.

“ Sound as ever, Mr. Augustus—sound as ever !” squeaked the doctor, affecting a little phtisicky cough to prove the truth of his assertions. “ And pray, Sir, how go on the classics ?—Do the duties of your cloth admit of occasional dallying with the muses,—eh ? Mr. Augustus ?”—

And the doctor's eyes twinkled as when, in former times, he attempted a joke with his pupils; while Lord Shoreham, aware that the uneful Nine of his uncle's Castaly were nor other than the coryphées of M. Laportes Parnassus, laughed out without restraint.

“ You don't quite neglect the classics I hope, young gentlemen?”—pursued the superannuated pedagogue—“ for as I used to say with Horace, to my late lamented pupil, you-brother the Viscount,—ugh, ugh, ugh,—

*Doctrina sed vim promovit incitām,
Rectique cultus pectora roberant;
Utcunque defecere mores,
Dedecorant bene-nata culpæ!*

or as Ovid hath it,—ugh, ugh, ugh!—

*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros!*

We don't forget our Ovid,—ugh, ugh, ugh!—

eh, Mr. Augustus ?” And again he raised his tin trumpet towards Drewe, for a reply.

“ You’re poking your fun at me, old boy !” answered Gus, with his usual dry immoveable countenance.

“ Sir ?”—mumbled the doctor, long accustomed to mistrust his own organs of hearing.

“ ’Tis my brother there who’s the Parson,” resumed Augustus. “ It was Alfred, you know, Doctor, who grabbed the living of Claystick, when they found me not worth japanning.”

“ True !—a rural deanery,—Claystick on the coast of Lincolnshire ; a tit bit—ugh, ugh, ugh !—quite a tit bit !—How many thousand souls, pray ?”

“ Soles, Doctor ?—flounders as I hope to be saved !” cried Parson Drewe, taking out his cigar-case. “ The cursedest take-in in England, that Lincolnshire coast ;—nothing but conger-eels and fen-flies.”

“ I remember visiting the parish of Clay-

stick with my late lamented pupil—ugh, ugh, ugh,—your brother the Viscount,” replied the Doctor, having accustomed himself by long habit neither to see, hear, nor understand. “Charming window, Sir, in the nave,—retiring window,—some say Saxon,—in my opinion—ugh, ugh,—the Gothic of Edward III—glass in fine preservation—design perfect—the incredulity of St. Thomas, if I recollect—ugh, ugh, ugh,—a tit-bit, quite a tit-bit—ought to have been in Dugdale!—Pray, Mr. Drewe, did you ever think of sending a notice of it to the Gentleman’s?”—demanded the once zealous correspondent of Sylvanus Urban.

“Not I, Doctor,—I sent the whole pack of rubbish to the *Old Gentleman* at once!” replied the Parson; and, as he turned round to strike his cigar flint, he discerned John Barnsley, on electioneering thoughts intent, bowing obsequiously on the threshold!

. L O N D O N :
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